THE GIRL WITH THE GOLDEN EYES

Honoré de Balzac

Translated by
ERNEST DOWSON

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PROLOGUE

THERE were brought together under the Empire, and in Paris, thirteen men all equally possessed by the same sentiment, all of them endowed with sufficient force to remain constant to one idea, sufficiently honorable not to betray one another, even when their individual interests conflicted, sufficiently politic to conceal the sacred ties which united them, sufficiently strong to maintain themselves above all law, courageous enough to undertake anything, and fortunate enough to have almost always succeeded in their designs; having encountered the greatest dangers, but never speaking of their defeats; inaccessible to fear, and having trembled neither before the prince, the headsman, nor virtue; accepting each other for such as they were, without taking into account social prejudices; criminals undoubtedly, but certainly remarkable for some of those qualities which mark great men, and recruiting their number

only from men of distinction. And, finally, that nothing might be lacking to the sombre and mysterious poetry of this history, these thirteen men have remained unknown, though all of them have realised the strangest chimerical ideas which are suggested to the imagination by that fantastic power wrongly attributed to the Manfreds, the Fausts, the Melmoths; and all of them are today crushed, or at least dispersed. They have quietly returned to the yoke of the civil law, as Morgan, the Achilles of pirates, transformed himself from a destroyer to a peaceful colonist, disposing without remorse by the light of his own fireside, of the millions gathered in blood by the red glare of incendiarism.

These Thirteen, who called themselves the Devourers and who had for their chief a man named Ferragus, were all of them men of the same quality as was Trelawny, the friend of Lord Byron and, as it is said, the original of the *Corsair;* all of them fatalists, men of heart and poetical, but wearied of the monotonous life they led, strongly drawn toward Asiatic enjoyments by those forces which awoke in them all the more furiously, having been so

long suppressed. One day, one of them, after having re-read *Venice Preserved*, after having admired the sublime union of Pierre and Jaffier, fell into contemplation of the peculiar virtues of those who find themselves thrown outside the social order, on the probity of the bagnios, on the fidelity of thieves to each other, on the privileges of exorbitant power which these men know how to conquer by concentrating all ideas in a single will. It appeared to him that man was greater than men. He thought that society in its entirety might belong to those distinguished ones who, to their natural abilities, to their acquired enlightenment, to their fortune, would join a fanaticism furious enough to cast into a single jet all these different forces. Thus equipped, immense in action and in intensity, their occult power, against which the social order would be defenceless, might overthrow in it all obstacles, overwhelm all wills, and give to each one of them the diabolical power of all.

This world isolated in the midst of the world, hostile to the world, admitting none of the ideas of the world, recognising none of its laws, submitting only to the conscience

of its own necessity, obedient to devotion only, acting altogether for one of the associates when one of them claimed the assistance of all; this life of buccaneers in kid gloves and in carriages; this intimate union of superiors, cold and mocking, smiling and cursing in the midst of a false and mean society, the certainty of being able to make everything bend under a caprice, of contriving a vengeance skilfully, of living in thirteen hearts; then the continual satisfaction of having a secret of hatred in the face of men, of being always armed against them, and of being able to retire into one's self with one idea more than even the most remarkable men could have;—this religion of pleasure and of egoism fanaticised thirteen men, who reconstituted the Society of Jesus for the profit of the Devil.

It was horrible and sublime. And in fact the compact was made; and in fact, endured, precisely because it appeared impossible. They were thirteen brothers who belonged to each other and who did not recognise each other in the world; but who came together in the evening, like conspirators, hiding none of their thoughts from each other, using al-

ternately a power like that of the Old Man of the Mountain; having a foothold in all the salons, their hands in all the strong-boxes, elbow-room in all the streets, their heads on any pillow, and, without scruple, making everything serve their fantastic will. No one could arrogate to himself the supreme power; only, the most vivid passion, the most exacting circumstances, assumed the initiative. They were thirteen unknown kings, but really kings, and more than kings, judges and executioners who, having made for themselves wings with which to scour society from the top to the bottom, disdained to be something in it because they could be all.

Of this band was Henri de Marsay; and of this band, which forgot nothing and forgave nothing, down to the least affront to one of its Thirteen, would Paquita Valdès have fallen victim, had not vengeance upon her exquisite head been evoked from another source and a more terrible one.

The Girl With The Golden Eyes

I

One of those sights in which most horror is to be encountered is, surely, the general aspect of the Parisian populace—a people fearful to behold, gaunt, yellow, tawny. Is not Paris a vast field in perpetual turmoil from a storm of interests beneath which are whirled along a crop of human beings, who are, more often than not, reaped by death, only to be born again as pinched as ever, men whose twisted and contorted faces give out at every pore the instinct, the desire, the poisons with which their brains are pregnant; not faces so much as masks; masks of weakness, masks of strength, masks of misery, masks of joy, masks of hypocrisy; all alike worn and stamped with the indelible signs of a panting cupidity? What is it they want? Gold or pleasure! A few observations upon the soul of Paris may explain the causes of its cadaverous physiognomy, which has but two ages—youth

and decay: youth, wan and colourless; decay, painted to seem young. In looking at this excavated people, foreigners, who are not prone to reflection, experience at first a movement of disgust towards the capital, that vast workshop of delights, from which, in a short time, they cannot even extricate themselves, and where they stay willingly to be corrupted. A few words will suffice to justify physiologically the almost infernal hue of Parisian faces, for it is not in mere sport that Paris has been called a hell. Take the phrase for truth. There all is smoke and fire, everything gleams, crackles, flames, evaporates, dies out, then lights up again with shooting sparks, and is consumed. In no other country has life ever been more ardent or acute. The social nature, ever in fusion, seems to say after each completed work: "Pass on to another!" just as nature says herself. Like Nature herself, this social nature is busied with insects and flowers of a day—ephemeral trifles; and so, too, it throws up fire and flame from its eternal crater. Perhaps, before analysing the causes which lend a special physiognomy to each tribe of this intelligent and mobile nation, the general cause should be pointed out which

bleaches and discolours, tints with blue or brown individuals in more or less degree.

By dint of taking interest in everything, the Parisian ends by being interested in nothing. No emotion dominating his face, which friction has rubbed away, it turns gray like the faces of those houses upon which all kinds of dust and smoke have blown. In effect, the Parisian, with his indifference on the day for what the morrow will bring forth, lives like a child, whatever may be his age. He grumbles at everything, consoles himself for everything, jests at everything, forgets, desires and tastes everything, seizes all with passion, quits all with indifference — his kings, his conquests, his glory, his idols of bronze or glass—as he throws away his stockings, his hats, and his fortune. In Paris no sentiment can withstand the drift of things, and their current compels a struggle in which the passions are relaxed: there love is a desire, and hatred a whim; there's no true kinsman but the thousand-francs note, no better friend than the pawnbroker. This universal toleration bears its fruits, and in the salon, as in the street, there is no one *de trop*, there is no one

absolutely useful, or absolutely harmful—knaves or fools, men of wit or integrity. There everything is tolerated: the government and the guillotine, religion and the cholera. You are always acceptable to this world, you will never be missed by it. What, then, is the dominating impulse in this country without morals, without faith, without any sentiment, wherein, however, every sentiment, belief and moral has its origin and end? It is gold and pleasure. Take those two words for a lantern, and explore that great stucco cage, that hive with its black gutters, and follow the windings of that thought which agitates, sustains, and occupies it! Consider! And, in the first place, examine the world which possesses nothing.

The artisan, the man of the proletariat, who uses his hands, his tongue, his back, his right arm, his five fingers to live—well, this very man, who should be the first to economise his vital principle, outruns his strength, yokes his wife to some machine, wears out his child and ties him to the wheel. The manufacturer —or I know not what secondary thread which sets in motion all these folk who with

their foul hands mould and gild porcelain, sew coats and dresses, beat out iron, turn wood and steel, weave hemp, festoon crystal, imitate flowers, work woollen things, break in horses, dress harness, carve in copper, paint carriages, blow glass, corrode the diamond, polish metals, turn marble into leaves, labour on pebbles, deck out thought, tinge, bleach, or blacken everything—well, this middleman has come to that world of sweat and good-will, of study and patience, with promises of lavish wages, either in the names of the town's caprices or with the voice of the monster dubbed speculation. Thus, these *quadrumanes* set themselves to watch, work and suffer, to fast, sweat and bestir them. Then, careless of the future, greedy of pleasure, counting on their right arm as the painter on his palette, lords for one day, they throw their money on Mondays to the *cabarets* which gird the town like a belt of mud, haunts of the most shameless of the daughters of Venus, in which the periodical money of this people, as ferocious in their pleasures as they are calm at work, is squandered as it had been at play. For five days, then, there is no repose for this labori-

ous portion of Paris! It is given up to actions which make it warped and rough, lean and pale, gush forth with a thousand fits of creative energy. And then its pleasure, its repose, are an exhausting debauch, swarthy and black with blows, white with intoxication, or yellow with indigestion. It lasts but two days, but it steals to-morrow's bread, the week's soup, the wife's dress, the child's wretched rags. Men, born doubtless to be beautiful — for all creatures have a relative beauty—are enrolled from their childhood beneath the yoke of force, beneath the rule of the hammer, the chisel, the loom, and have been promptly vulcanised. Is not Vulcan, with his hideousness and his strength, the emblem of this strong and hideous nation—sublime in its mechanical intelligence, patient in its season, and once in a century terrible, inflammable as gunpowder, and ripe with brandy for the madness of revolution, with wits enough, in fine, to take fire at a captious word, which signifies to it always: Gold and Pleasure! If we comprise in it all those who hold out their hands for an alms, for lawful wages, or the five francs that are granted to

every kind of Parisian prostitution, in short, for all money well or ill-earned, this people numbers three hundred thousand individuals. Were it not for the *cabarets*, would not the Government be overturned every Tuesday? Happily, by Tuesday, this people is glutted, sleeps off its pleasure, is penniless, and returns to its labour, to dry bread, stimulated by a need of material procreation, which has become a habit to it. None the less, this people has its phenomenal virtues, its complete men, unknown Napoleons, who are the type of its strength carried to its highest expression, and sum up its social capacity in an existence wherein thought and movement combine less to bring joy into it than to neutralise the action of sorrow.

Chance has made an artisan economical, chance has favoured him with forethought, he has been able to look forward, has met with a wife and found himself a father, and, after some years of hard privation, he embarks in some little draper's business, hires a shop. If neither sickness nor vice blocks his way—if he has prospered—there is the sketch of this normal life.

And, in the first place, hail to that king of Parisian activity, to whom time and space give way. Yes, hail to that being, composed of saltpetre and gas, who makes children for France during his laborious nights, and in the day multiplies his personality for the service, glory, and pleasure of his fellow citizens. This man solves the problem of sufficing at once to his amiable wife, to his hearth, to the *Constitutionnel*, to his office, to the National Guard, to the opera, and to God; but, only in order that the *Constitutionnel*, his office, the National Guard, the opera, his wife, and God, may be changed into coin. In fine, hail to an irreproachable pluralist. Up every day at five o'clock, he traverses like a bird the space which separates his dwelling from the Rue Montmartre. Let it blow or thunder, rain or snow, he is at the *Constitutionnel*, and waits there for the load of newspapers which he has undertaken to distribute. He receives this political bread with eagerness, takes it and bears it away. At nine o'clock he is in the bosom of his family, flings a jest to his wife, snatches a loud kiss from her, gulps down a cup of coffee, or scolds his

children. At a quarter to ten he puts in an appearance at the *Mairie*. There, stuck upon a stool, like a parrot on its perch, warmed by Paris town, he registers until four o'clock, with never a tear or a smile, the deaths and births of an entire district. The sorrow, the happiness of the parish, flow beneath his pen—as the essence of the *Constitutionnel* travelled before upon his shoulders. Nothing weighs upon him! He goes always straight before him, takes his patriotism ready made from the newspaper, contradicts no one, shouts or applauds with the world, and lives like a bird. Two yards from his parish, in the event of an important ceremony, he can yield his place to an assistant, and betake himself to chant a requiem from a stall in the church of which on Sundays he is the fairest ornament, where his is the most imposing voice, where he distorts his huge mouth with energy to thunder out a joyous *Amen*. So is he chorister. At four o'clock, freed from his official servitude, he re-appears to shed joy and gaiety upon the most famous shop in the city. Happy is his wife, he has no time to be jealous: he is a man of action rather than

of sentiment. His mere arrival spurs the young ladies at the counter; their bright eyes storm the customers; he expands in the midst of all the finery, the lace and muslin kerchiefs, that their cunning hands have wrought. Or, again, more often still, before his dinner he waits on a client, copies the page of a newspaper, or carries to the doorkeeper some goods that have been delayed. Every other day, at six, he is faithful to his post. A permanent bass for the chorus, he betakes himself to the opera, prepared to become a soldier or an arab, prisoner, savage, peasant, spirit, camel's leg or lion, a devil or a genie, a slave or an eunuch, black or white; always ready to feign joy or sorrow, pity or astonishment, to utter cries that never vary, to hold his tongue, to hunt, or fight for Rome or Egypt, but always at heart—a huckster still.

At midnight he returns—a man, the good husband, the tender father; he slips into the conjugal bed, his imagination still afire with the illusive forms of the operatic nymphs, and so turns to the profit of conjugal love the world's depravities, the voluptuous curves of Taglioni's leg. And, finally, if he sleeps, he

sleeps apace, and hurries through his slumber as he does his life.

This man sums up all things—history, literature, politics, government, religion, military science. Is he not a living encyclopædia, a grotesque Atlas; ceaselessly in motion, like Paris itself, and knowing not repose? He is all legs. No physiognomy could preserve its purity amid such toils. Perhaps the artisan, who dies at thirty, an old man, his stomach tanned by repeated doses of brandy, will be held, according to certain leisured philosophers, to be happier than the huckster is. The one perishes in a breath, and the other by degrees. From his eight industries, from the labour of his shoulders, his throat, his hands, from his wife and his business, the one derives —as from so many farms—children, some thousands of francs, and the most laborious happiness that has ever diverted the heart of man. This fortune and these children, or the children who sum up everything for him, become the prey of the world above, to which he brings his ducats and his daughter or his son, reared at college, who, with more education than his father, raises higher his am-

bitious gaze. Often the son of a retail tradesman would fain be something in the State.

Ambition of that sort carries on our thought to the second Parisian sphere. Go up one story, then, and descend to the *entresol*; or climb down from the attic and remain on the fourth floor; in fine, penetrate into the world which has possessions: the same result! Wholesale merchants, and their men—people with small banking accounts and much integrity—rogues and catspaws, clerks old and young, sheriffs' clerks, barristers' clerks, solicitors' clerks; in fine, all the working, thinking and speculating members of that lower middle class which honeycombs the interests of Paris and watches over its granary, accumulates the coin, stores the products that the proletariat have made, preserves the fruits of the South, the fishes, the wine from every sun-favoured hill; which stretches its hands over the Orient, and takes from it the shawls that the Russ and the Turk despise; which harvests even from the Indies; crouches down in expectation of a sale, greedy of profit; which discounts bills, turns over and collects all kinds of securities, holds all Paris in its

hand, watches over the fantasies of children, spies out the caprices and the vices of mature age, sucks money out of disease. Even so, if they drink no brandy, like the artisan, nor wallow in the mire of debauch, all equally abuse their strength, immeasurably strain their bodies and their minds alike, are burned away with desires, devastated with the swiftness of the pace. In their case the physical distortion is accomplished beneath the whip of interests, beneath the scourge of ambitions which torture the educated portion of this monstrous city, just as in the case of the proletariat it is brought about by the cruel see-saw of the material elaborations perpetually required from the despotism of the aristocratic "*I will.*" Here, too, then, in order to obey that universal master, pleasure or gold, they must devour time, hasten time, find more than four and twenty hours in the day and night, waste themselves, slay themselves, and purchase two years of unhealthy repose with thirty years of old age. Only, the working man dies in hospital when the last term of his stunted growth expires, whereas the man of the middle class is set upon living, and lives

on, but in a state of idiocy. You will meet him, with his worn, flat old face, with no light in his eyes, with no strength in his limbs, dragging himself with a dazed air along the boulevard—the belt of his Venus, of his beloved city. What was his want? The sabre of the National Guard, a permanent stock-pot, a decent plot in Père-Lachaise, and, for his old age, a little gold honestly earned. *His* Monday is on Sunday, his rest a drive in a hired carriage—a country excursion during which his wife and children glut themselves merrily with dust or bask in the sun; his dissipation is at the restaurateur's, whose poisonous dinner has won renown, or at some family ball, where he suffocates till midnight. Some fools are surprised at the phantasmagoria of the monads which they see with the aid of the microscope in a drop of water; but what would Rabelais' Gargantua,—that misunderstood figure of an audacity so sublime,—what would that giant say, fallen from the celestial spheres, if he amused himself by contemplating the motions of this secondary life of Paris, of which here is one of the formulæ? Have you seen one of those little constructions

—cold in summer, and with no other warmth than a small stove in winter—placed beneath the vast copper dome which crowns the Halle-au-blé? Madame is there by morning. She is engaged at the markets, and makes by this occupation twelve thousand francs a year, people say. Monsieur, when Madame is up, passes into a gloomy office, where he lends money till the week-end to the tradesmen of his district. By nine o'clock he is at the passport office, of which he is one of the minor officials. By evening he is at the box-office of the Théâtre Italien, or of any other theatre you like. The children are put out to nurse, and only return to be sent to college or to boarding school. Monsieur and Madame live on the third floor, have but one cook, give dances in a salon twelve foot by eight, lit by argand lamps; but they give a hundred and fifty thousand francs to their daughter, and retire at the age of fifty, an age when they begin to show themselves on the balcony of the opera, in a *fiacre* at Longchamps; or, on sunny days, in faded clothes on the boulevards —the fruit of all this sowing. Respected by their neighbours, in good odour with the

government, connected with the upper middle classes, Monsieur obtains at sixty-five the Cross of the Legion of Honour, and his daughter's father-in-law, a parochial mayor, invites him to his evenings. These life-long labours, then, are for the good of the children, whom these lower middle classes are inevitably driven to exalt. Thus each sphere directs all its efforts towards the sphere above it. The son of the rich grocer becomes a notary, the son of the timber merchant becomes a magistrate. No link is wanting in the chain, and everything stimulates the upward march of money.

Thus we are brought to the third circle of this hell, which, perhaps, will some day find its Dante. In this third social circle, a sort of Parisian belly, in which the interests of the town are digested, and where they are condensed into the form known as *business,* there moves and agitates, as by some acrid and bitter intestinal process, the crowd of lawyers, doctors, notaries, councillors, business men, bankers, big merchants, speculators and magistrates. Here are to be found even more causes of moral and physical destruction than elsewhere. These people—almost all of them

—live in unhealthy offices, in fetid antichambers, in little barred dens, and spend their days bowed down beneath the weight of affairs; they rise at dawn to be in time, not to be left behind, to gain all or not to lose, to over-reach a man or his money, to open or wind up some business, to take advantage of some fleeting opportunity, to get a man hanged or set him free. They infect their horses, they over-drive and age and break them, like their own legs, before their time. Time is their tyrant: it fails them, it escapes them; they can neither expand it nor cut it short. What soul can remain great, pure, moral and generous, and, consequently, what face retain its beauty in this depraving practice of a calling which compels one to bear the weight of the public sorrows, to analyse them, to weigh them, estimate them, and mark them out by rule? Where do these folk put aside their hearts? . . . I do not know; but they leave them somewhere or other, when they have any, before they descend each morning into the abyss of the misery which puts families on the rack. For them there is no such thing as mystery; they

see the reverse side of society, whose confessors they are, and despise it. Then whatever they do, owing to their contact with corruption, they either are horrified at it and grow gloomy, or else, out of lassitude or some secret compromise, espouse it. In fine, they necessarily become callous to every sentiment, since man, his laws and his institutions, make them steal, like jackals, from corpses that are still warm. At all hours the financier is trampling on the living, the attorney on the dead, the pleader on the conscience. Forced to be speaking without a rest, they all substitute words for ideas, phrases for feelings, and their soul becomes a larynx. Neither the great merchant, nor the judge, nor the pleader preserves his sense of right; they feel no more, they apply set rules that leave cases out of count. Borne along by their headlong course, they are neither husbands nor fathers nor lovers; they glide on sledges over the facts of life, and live at all times at the high pressure conduced by business and the vast city. When they return to their homes they are required to go to a ball, to the opera, into society, where they can make clients, acquaintances,

protectors. They all eat to excess, play and keep vigil, and their faces become bloated, flushed, or emaciated.

To this terrific expenditure of intellectual strength, to such multifold moral contradictions, they oppose—not, indeed, pleasure, it would be too pale a contrast—but debauchery, a debauchery both secret and alarming, for they have all means at their disposal, and fix the morality of society. Their genuine stupidity lies hid beneath their specialism. They know their business, but are ignorant of everything which is outside it. So that to preserve their self-conceit they question everything, are crudely and crookedly critical. They appear to be sceptics and are in reality simpletons; they swamp their wits in interminable arguments. Almost all conveniently adopt social, literary or political prejudices, to do away with the need of having opinions, just as they adapt their conscience to the standard of the Code or the Tribunal of Commerce. Having started early to become men of note, they turn into mediocrities, and crawl over the high places of the world. So, too, their faces present the harsh pallor, the deceitful colour-

ing, those dull, tarnished eyes and garrulous, sensual mouths, in which the observer recognises the symptoms of the degeneracy of the thought and its rotation in the circle of a special idea which destroys the creative faculties of the brain and the gift of seeing in large, of generalising and deducing. No man who has allowed himself to be caught in the revolutions or the gear of these huge machines can ever become great. If he is a doctor, either he has practised little or he is an exception—a Bichat who dies young. If a great merchant, something remains — he is almost Jacques Cœur. Did Robespierre practise? Danton was an idler who waited. But who, moreover, has ever felt envious of the figures of Danton and Robespierre, however lofty they were? These men of affairs, *par excellence,* attract money to them, and hoard it in order to ally themselves with aristocratic families. If the ambition of the working man is that of the small tradesman, here, too, are the same passions. In Paris vanity sums up all the passions. The type of this class might be either the ambitious *bourgeois,* who, after a life of privation and continual scheming, passes into

the Council of State as an ant passes through a chink; or some newspaper editor, jaded with intrigue, whom the King makes a peer of France—perhaps to revenge himself on the nobility; or some notary become mayor of his parish: all people crushed with business, who, if they attain their end, are literally *killed* in its attainment. In France the usage is to glorify wigs. Napoleon, Louis XIV., the great rulers, alone have always wished for young men to fulfil their projects.

Above this sphere the artist world exists. But here, too, the faces stamped with the seal of originality are worn, nobly indeed, but worn, fatigued, nervous. Harassed by a need of production, outrun by their costly fantasies, worn out by devouring genius, hungry for pleasure, the artists of Paris would all regain by excessive labour what they have lost by idleness, and vainly seek to reconcile the world and glory, money and art. To begin with, the artist is ceaselessly panting under his creditors; his necessities beget his debts, and his debts require of him his nights. After his labour, his pleasure. The comedian plays till midnight, studies in the morning, rehearses

at noon; the sculptor is bent before his statue; the journalist is a marching thought, like the soldier when at war; the painter who is the fashion is crushed with work, the painter with no occupation, if he feels himself to be a man of genius, gnaws his entrails. Competition, rivalry, calumny assail talent. Some, in desperation, plunge into the abyss of vice, others die young and unknown because they have discounted their future too soon. Few of these figures, originally sublime, remain beautiful. On the other hand, the flagrant beauty of their heads is not understood. An artist's face is always exorbitant, it is always above or below the conventional lines of what fools call the *beau-idéal*. What power is it that destroys them? Passion. Every passion in Paris resolves into two terms: gold and pleasure. Now, do you not breathe again? Do you not feel air and space purified? Here is neither labour nor suffering. The soaring arch of gold has reached the summit. From the lowest gutters, where its stream commences, from the little shops where it is stopped by puny coffer-dams, from the heart of the counting-houses and great workshops,

where its volume is that of ingots—gold, in the shape of dowries and inheritances, guided by the hands of young girls or the bony fingers of age, courses towards the aristocracy, where it will become a blazing, expansive stream. But, before leaving the four territories upon which the utmost wealth of Paris is based, it is fitting, having cited the moral causes, to deduce those which are physical, and to call attention to a pestilence, latent, as it were, which incessantly acts upon the faces of the porter, the artisan, the small shopkeeper; to point out a deleterious influence the corruption of which equals that of the Parisian administrators who allow it so complacently to exist!

If the air of the houses in which the greater proportion of the middle classes live is noxious, if the atmosphere of the streets belches out cruel miasmas into stuffy back-kitchens where there is little air, realise that, apart from this pestilence, the forty thousand houses of this great city have their foundations in filth, which the powers that be have not yet seriously attempted to enclose with mortar walls solid enough to prevent even the most fetid

mud from filtering through the soil, poisoning the wells, and maintaining subterraneously to Lutetia the tradition of her celebrated name. Half of Paris sleeps amidst the putrid exhalations of courts and streets and sewers. But let us turn to the vast saloons, gilded and airy; the hotels in their gardens, the rich, indolent, happy, moneyed world. There the faces are lined and scarred with vanity. There nothing is real. To seek for pleasure is it not to find *ennui?* People in Society have at an early age warped their nature. Having no occupation other than to wallow in pleasure, they have speedily misused their sense, as the artisan has misused brandy. Pleasure is of the nature of certain medical substances: in order to obtain constantly the same effects the doses must be doubled, and death or degradation is contained in the last. All the lower classes are on their knees before the wealthy, and watch their tastes in order to turn them into vices and exploit them. Thus you see in these folk at an early age tastes instead of passions, romantic fantasies and luke-warm loves. There impotence reigns; there ideas have ceased—they have evaporated

together with energy amongst the affectations of the boudoir and the cajolements of women. There are fledglings of forty, old doctors of sixty years. The wealthy obtain in Paris ready-made wit and science — formulated opinions which save them from the need of having wit, science, or opinion of their own. The irrationality of this world is equalled by its weakness and its licentiousness. It is greedy of time to the point of wasting it. Seek in it for affection as little as for ideas. Its kisses conceal a profound indifference, its urbanity a perpetual contempt. It has no other fashion of love. Flashes of wit without profundity, a wealth of indiscretion, scandal, and, above all, commonplace. Such is the sum of its speech; but these happy fortunates pretend that they do not meet to make and repeat maxims in the manner of La Rochfouecauld, as though there did not exist a mean, invented by the Eighteenth Century, between a superfluity and absolute blank. If a few men of character indulge in witticism, at once subtle and refined, they are misunderstood; soon, tired of giving without receiving, they remain at home, and leave fools to reign over

their territory. This hollow life, this perpetual expectation of a pleasure which never comes, this permanent *ennui* and emptiness of soul, heart and mind, this lassitude of the upper Parisian world, is reproduced on its features, and stamps its parchment faces, its premature wrinkles, that physiognomy of the wealthy upon which impotence has set its grimace, in which gold is mirrored, and whence intelligence has fled.

Such a view of moral Paris proves that physical Paris could not be other than it is. This coronetted town is like a queen, who, being always with child, has desires of irresistible fury. Paris is the crown of the world, a brain which perishes of genius and leads human civilisation; it is a great man, a perpetually creative artist, a politician with second sight who must of necessity have wrinkles on his forehead, the vices of the great man, the fantasies of the artist, and the politician's disillusions. Its physiognomy suggests the evolution of good and evil, battle and victory; the moral combat of '89, the clarion calls of which still re-echo in every corner of the world; and also the downfall of

1814. Thus this city can no more be moral, or cordial, or clean, than the engines which impel those proud leviathans which you admire when they cleave the waves! Is not Paris a sublime vessel laden with intelligence? Yes, her arms are one of those oracles which fatality sometimes allows. The *City of Paris* has her great mast, all of bronze, carved with victories, and for watchman—Napoleon. The barque may roll and pitch, but she cleaves the world, illuminates it through the hundred mouths of her tribunes, ploughs the seas of science, rides with full sail, cries from the height of her tops, with the voice of her scientists and artists: "Onward, advance! Follow me!" She carries a huge crew, which delights in adorning her with fresh streamers. Boys and urchins laughing in the rigging; ballast of heavy *bourgeoisie;* working-men and sailor-men touched with tar; in her cabins the lucky passengers; elegant midshipmen smoke their cigars leaning over the bulwarks; then, on the deck, her soldiers, innovators or ambitious, would accost every fresh shore, and shooting out their bright lights upon it, ask for glory which is pleasure, or for love

which needs gold.

Thus the exorbitant movement of the proletariat, the corrupting influence of the interests which consume the two middle classes, the cruelties of the artist's thought, and the excessive pleasure which is sought for incessantly by the great, explain the normal ugliness of the Parisian physiognomy. It is only in the Orient that the human race presents a magnificent figure but that is an effect of the constant calm affected by those profound philosophers with their long pipes, their short legs, their square contour, who despise and hold activity in horror, whilst in Paris the little and the great and the mediocre run and leap and drive, whipped on by an inexorable goddess, Necessity: the necessity for money, glory, and amusement. Thus, any face which is fresh and graceful and reposeful, any really young face, is in Paris the most extraordinary of exceptions; it is met with rarely. Should you see one there, be sure it belongs either to a young and ardent ecclesiastic or to some good abbé of forty with three chins; to a young girl of pure life, such as is brought up in certain middle-class families; to a mother of twenty, still full of illusions, as

she suckles her first-born; to a young man newly embarked from the provinces, and entrusted to the care of some devout dowager who keeps him without a sou; or, perhaps, to some shop assistant who goes to bed at midnight wearied out with folding and unfolding calico, and rises at seven o'clock to arrange the window; often again to some man of science or poetry, who lives monastically in the embrace of a fine idea, who remains sober, patient, and chaste; else to some self-contented fool, feeding himself on folly, reeking of health, in a perpetual state of absorption with his own smile; or to the soft and happy race of loungers, the only folk really happy in Paris, which unfolds for them hour by hour its moving poetry.

Nevertheless, there is in Paris a proportion of privileged beings to whom this excessive movement of industries, interests, affairs, arts and gold is profitable. These beings are women. Although they also have a thousand secret causes which, here more than elsewhere, destroy their physiognomy, there are to be found in the feminine world little happy colonies, who live in Oriental fashion and can preserve their beauty, but these women

rarely show themselves on foot in the streets, they lie hid like rare plants who only unfold their petals at certain hours, and constitute veritable exotic exceptions. However, Paris is essentially the country of contrasts. If true sentiments are rare there, there also are to be found, as elsewhere, noble friendships and unlimited devotion. On this battlefield of interests and passions, just as in the midst of those marching societies where egoism triumphs, where everyone is obliged to defend himself, and which we call *armies,* it seems as though sentiments liked to be complete when they showed themselves, and are sublime by juxtaposition. So it is with faces. In Paris one sometimes sees in the aristocracy, set like stars, the ravishing faces of young people, the fruit of quite exceptional manners and education. To the youthful beauty of the English stock they unite the firmness of southern traits. The fire of their eyes, a delicious bloom on their lips, the lustrous black of their soft locks, a white complexion, a distinguished caste of features, render them the flowers of the human race, magnificent to behold against the mass of other faces, worn,

old, wrinkled, and grimacing. So women, too, admire such young people with that eager pleasure which men take in watching a pretty girl, elegant, gracious, and embellished with all the virginal charms with which our imagination pleases to adorn the perfect woman. If this hurried glance at the population of Paris has enabled us to conceive the rarity of a Raphaelesque face, and the passionate admiration which such an one must inspire at the first sight, the prime interest of our history will have been justified. *Quod erat demonstrandum*—if one may be permitted to apply scholastic formulæ to the science of manners.

II

Upon one of those fine spring mornings, when the leaves, although unfolded, are not yet green, when the sun begins to gild the roofs, and the sky is blue, when the population of Paris issues from its cells to swarm along the boulevards, glides like a serpent of a thousand coils through the Rue de la Paix towards the Tuileries, saluting the hymeneal magnificence which the country puts on; on one of these joyous days, then a young man as beautiful as the day itself, dressed with taste, easy of manner—to let out the secret he was a love-child, the natural son of Lord Dudley and the famous Marquise de Vordac—was walking in the great avenue of the Tuileries. This Adonis, by name Henri de Marsay, was born in France, when Lord Dudley had just married the young lady, already Henri's mother, to an old gentleman called M. de Marsay. This faded and almost extinguished butter-

fly recognised the child as his own in consideration of the life interest in a fund of a hundred thousand francs definitively assigned to his putative son; a generosity which did not cost Lord Dudley too dear. French funds were worth at that time seventeen francs, fifty centimes. The old gentleman died without having ever known his wife. Madame de Marsay subsequently married the Marquis de Vordac, but before becoming a marquise she showed very little anxiety as to her son and Lord Dudley. To begin with, the declaration of war between France and England had separated the two lovers, and fidelity at all costs was not, and never will be, the fashion of Paris. Then the successes of the woman, elegant, pretty, universally adored, crushed in the Parisienne the maternal sentiment. Lord Dudley was no more troubled about his offspring than was the mother, the speedy infidelity of a young girl he had ardently loved gave him, perhaps, a sort of aversion for all that issued from her. Moreover, fathers can, perhaps, only love the children with whom they are fully acquainted; a social belief of the utmost importance for the peace of families, which

should be held by all the celibate, proving as it does that paternity is a sentiment nourished artificially by woman, custom and the law.

Poor Henri de Marsay knew no other father than that one of the two who was not compelled to be one. The paternity of M. de Marsay was naturally most incomplete. In the natural order, it is but for a few fleeting instants that children have a father, and M. de Marsay imitated nature. The worthy man would not have sold his name had he been free from vices. Thus he squandered without remorse in gambling hells, and drank elsewhere the few dividends which the National Treasury paid to its bond-holders. Then he handed over the child to an aged sister, a Demoiselle de Marsay, who took much care of him, and provided him, out of the meagre sum allowed by her brother, with a tutor, an abbé without a farthing, who took the measure of the youth's future, and determined to pay himself out of the hundred thousand livres for the care given to his pupil, for whom he conceived an affection. As chance had it, this tutor was a true priest, one of those ecclesiastics cut out to become cardinals in

France, or Borgias beneath the tiara. He taught the child in three years what he might have learnt at college in ten. Then the great man, by name the Abbé de Maronis, completed the education of his pupil by making him study civilisation under all its aspects: he nourished him on his experience, led him little into churches, which at that time were closed; introduced him sometimes behind the scenes of theatres, more often into the houses of courtesans; he exhibited human emotions to him one by one; taught him politics in the drawing-rooms, where they simmered at the time; explained to him the machinery of government, and endeavoured out of attraction towards a fine nature, deserted, yet rich in promise, virilely to replace a mother: is not the Church the mother of orphans? The pupil was responsive to so much care. The worthy priest died in 1812, a bishop, with the satisfaction of having left in this world a child whose heart and mind were so well moulded that he could outwit a man of forty. Who would have expected to find a heart of bronze, a brain of steel, beneath external traits as seductive as ever the old

painters, those naïve artists, had given to the serpent in the terrestrial paradise? Nor was that all. In addition, the good-natured prelate had procured for the child of his choice certain acquaintances in the best Parisian society, which might equal in value, in the young man's hand, another hundred thousand invested livres. In fine, this priest, vicious but politic, sceptical yet learned, treacherous yet amiable, weak in appearance yet as vigorous physically as intellectually, was so genuinely useful to his pupil, so complacent to his vices, so fine a calculator of all kinds of strength, so profound when it was needful to make some human reckoning, so youthful at table, at Frascati, at——I know not where, that the grateful Henri de Marsay was hardly moved at aught in 1814, except when he looked at the portrait of his beloved bishop, the only personal possession which the prelate had been able to bequeath him (admirable type of the men whose genius will preserve the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church, compromised for the moment by the feebleness of its recruits and the decrepid age of its pontifs; but if the church likes!)

The continental war prevented young De Marsay from knowing his real father. It is doubtful whether he was aware of his name. A deserted child, he was equally ignorant of Madame de Marsay. Naturally, he had little regret for his putative father. As for Mademoiselle de Marsay, his only mother, he built for her a handsome little monument in Père Lachaise when she died. Monseigneur de Maronis had guaranteed to this old lady one of the best places in the skies, so that when he saw her die happy, Henri gave her some egotistical tears; he began to weep on his own account. Observing this grief, the abbé dried his pupil's tears, bidding him observe that the good woman took her snuff most offensively, and was becoming so ugly and deaf and tedious that he ought to return thanks for her death. The bishop had emancipated his pupil in 1811. Then, when the mother of M. de Marsay re-married, the priest chose, in a family council, one of those honest dullards, picked out by him through the windows of his confessional, and charged him with the administration of the fortune, the revenues of which he was willing to apply to the needs

of the community, but of which he wished to preserve the capital.

Towards the end of 1814, then, Henri de Marsay had no sentiment of obligation in the world, and was as free as an unmated bird. Although he had lived twenty-two years he appeared to be barely seventeen. As a rule the most fastidious of his rivals considered him to be the prettiest youth in Paris. From his father, Lord Dudley, he had derived a pair of the most amorously deceiving blue eyes; from his mother the bushiest of black hair; from both pure blood, the skin of a young girl, a gentle and modest expression, a refined and aristocratic figure, and beautiful hands. For a woman, to see him was to lose her head for him; do you understand? to conceive one of those desires which eat the heart, which are forgotten because of the impossibility of satisfying them, because women in Paris are commonly without tenacity. Few of them say to themselves, after the fashion of men, the "*Je Maintiendrai*" of the House of Orange.

Underneath this fresh, young life, and in spite of the limpid springs in his eyes, Henri had a lion's courage, a monkey's agility. He

could cut a ball in half at ten paces on the blade of a knife; he rode his horse in a way that made you realise the fable of the Centaur; drove a four-in-hand with grace; was as light as a cherub and quiet as a lamb, but knew how to beat a townsman at the terrible game of *savate* or cudgels; moreover, he played the piano in a fashion which would have enabled him to become an artist should he fall on calamity, and owned a voice which would have been worth to Barbaja fifty thousand francs a season. Alas, that all these fine qualities, these pretty faults, were tarnished by one abominable vice: he believed neither in man nor woman, God nor Devil. Capricious nature had commenced by endowing him, a priest had completed the work.

To render this adventure comprehensible, it is necessary to add here that Lord Dudley naturally found many women disposed to reproduce samples of such a delicious pattern. His second masterpiece of this kind was a young girl named Euphémie, born of a Spanish lady, reared in Havana, and brought to Madrid with a young Creole woman of the Antilles, and with all the ruinous tastes of

the Colonies, but fortunately married to an old and extremely rich Spanish noble, Don Hijos, Marquis de San-Réal, who, since the occupation of Spain by French troops, had taken up his abode in Paris, and lived in the Rue St. Lazare. As much from indifference as from any respect for the innocence of youth, Lord Dudley was not in the habit of keeping his children informed of the relations he created for them in all parts. That is a slightly inconvenient form of civilisation; it has so many advantages that we must overlook its drawbacks in consideration of its benefits. Lord Dudley, to make no more words of it, came to Paris in 1816 to take refuge from the pursuit of English justice, which protects nothing Oriental except commerce. The exiled lord, when he saw Henri, asked who that handsome young man might be. Then, upon hearing the name, "Ah, it is my son . . . What a pity!" he said.

Such was the story of the young man who, about the middle of the month of April, 1815, was walking indolently up the broad avenue of the Tuileries, after the fashion of all those animals, who, knowing their strength,

pass along in majesty and peace. Middle class matrons turned back naïvely to look at him again, other women, without turning round, waited for him to pass again, and engraved him in their minds that they might remember in due season that fragrant face, which would not have disadorned the body of the fairest amongst themselves.

"What are you doing here on Sunday?" said the Marquis de Ronquerolles to Henri, as he passed.

"There's a fish in the net," answered the young man.

This exchange of thoughts was accomplished by means of two significant glances, without it appearing that either De Ronquerolles or De Marsay had any knowledge of the other. The young man was taking note of the passers-by with that promptitude of eye and ear which is peculiar to the Parisian, who seems, at first sight, to see and hear nothing, but who sees and hears all.

At that moment a young man came up to him and took him familiarly by the arm, saying to him: "How are you, my dear De Marsay?"

"Extremely well," De Marsay answered,

with that air of apparent affection which amongst the young men of Paris proves nothing, either for the present or the future.

In effect, the youth of Paris resemble the youth of no other town. They may be divided into two classes: the young man who has something, and the young man who has nothing; or the young man who thinks and he who spends. But, be it well understood, this applies only to those natives of the soil, who maintain in Paris the delicious course of the elegant life. There exist, as well, plenty of other young men, but they are children who are late in conceiving Parisian life, and who remain its dupes. They do not speculate, they study; they *fag*, as the others say. Finally there are to be found, besides, certain young people, rich or poor, who embrace careers and follow them with a single heart; they are somewhat like the Émile of Rousseau, of the flesh of citizens, and they never appear in society. The diplomatic impolitely dub them fools. Be they that or no, they augment the number of those mediocrities beneath the yoke of which France is bowed down. They are always there, always ready to bungle

public or private concerns with the dull trowel of their mediocrity, bragging of their impotence, which they count for conduct and integrity. This sort of social *prizemen* infests the administration, the army, the magistracy, the chambers, the courts. They diminish and level down the country and constitute, in some manner, in the body politic, a lymph which infects it and renders it flabby. These honest folk call men of talent immoral or rogues. If such rogues require to be paid for their services, at least their services are there; whereas the other sort do harm and are respected by the mob; but, happily for France, elegant youth stigmatises them ceaselessly under the name of louts.

At the first glance, then, it is natural to consider as very distinct the two sorts of young men who lead the life of elegance, the amiable corporation to which Henri de Marsay belonged. But the observer, who goes beyond the superficial aspect of things, is soon convinced that the difference is purely moral, and that nothing is so deceptive as this pretty outside. Nevertheless, all alike take precedence over everybody else; speak

rightly or wrongly of things, of men, literature, and the fine arts; have ever in their mouth the Pitt and Coburg of each year; interrupt a conversation with a pun; turn into ridicule science and the *savant;* despise all things which they do not know or which they fear; set themselves above all by constituting themselves the supreme judges of all. They would all hoax their fathers, and be ready to shed crocodile tears upon their mother's breasts; but generally they believe in nothing, blaspheme women, or play at modesty, and in reality are led by some old woman or an evil courtesan. They are all equally eaten to the bone with calculation, with depravity, with a brutal lust to succeed, and if you plumbed for their hearts you would find in all a stone. In their normal state they have the prettiest exterior, stake their friendship at every turn, are captivating alike. The same badinage dominates their ever-changing jargon; they seek for oddity in their toilette, glory in repeating the stupidities of such and such actor who is in fashion, and commence operations, it matters not with whom, with contempt and imperti-

nence, in order to have, as it were, the first move in the game; but, woe betide him who does not know how to take a blow on one cheek for the sake of rendering two. They resemble, in fine, that pretty white spray which crests the stormy waves. They dress and dance, dine and take their pleasure on the day of Waterloo, in the time of cholera or revolution. Finally, their expenses are all the same, but here the contrast comes in. Of this fluctuating fortune, so agreeably flung away, some possess the capital for which the others wait; they have the same tailors, but the bills of the latter are still to pay. Next, if the first, like sieves, take in ideas of all kinds without retaining any, the latter compare them and assimilate all the good. If the first believe they know something, know nothing and understand everything, lend all to those who need nothing and offer nothing to those who are in need; the latter study secretly others' thoughts and place out their money, like their follies, at big interest. The one class have no more faithful impressions, because their soul, like a mirror, worn from use, no longer reflects any image; the others

economise their senses and life, even while they seem, like the first, to be flinging them away broadcast. The first, on the faith of a hope, devote themselves without conviction to a system, which has wind and tide against it, but they leap upon another political craft when the first goes adrift; the second take the measure of the future, sound it, and see in political fidelity what the English see in commercial integrity, an element of success. Where the young man of possessions makes a pun or an epigram upon the restoration of the throne, he who has nothing makes a public calculation or a secret reservation, and obtains everything by giving a handshake to his friends. The one deny every faculty to others, look upon all their ideas as new, as though the world had been made yesterday, they have unlimited confidence in themselves, and no crueller enemy than those same selves. But the others are armed with an incessant distrust of men, whom they estimate at their value, and are sufficiently profound to have one thought beyond their friends, whom they exploit; then of evenings, when they lay their heads on their pillows, they weigh men

as a miser weighs his golden pieces. The one are vexed at an aimless impertinence, and allow themselves to be ridiculed by the diplomatic, who make them dance for them by pulling what is the main string of these puppets — their vanity. Thus, a day comes when those who had nothing have something, and those who had something have nothing. The latter look at their comrades who have achieved position as cunning fellows; their hearts may be bad, but their heads are strong. "He is very strong!" is the supreme praise accorded to those who have attained *quibuscumque viis,* political rank, a woman, or a fortune. Amongst them are to be found certain young men who play this *rôle* by commencing with having debts. Naturally, these are more dangerous than those who play it without a farthing.

The young man who called himself a friend of Henry de Marsay was a rattle-head who had come from the provinces, and whom the young men then in the fashion were teaching the art of running through an inheritance, but he had one last leg to stand on in his province, in the shape of a secure

establishment. He was simply an heir who had passed without any transition from his pittance of a hundred francs a month to the entire paternal fortune, and who, if he had not wit enough to perceive that he was laughed at, was sufficiently cautious to stop short at two-thirds of his capital. He had learned at Paris, for a consideration of some thousands of francs, the exact value of harness, the art of not being too respectful to his gloves, learned to make skilful meditations upon the right wages to give people, and to seek out what bargain was the best to close with them. He set store on his capacity to speak in good terms of his horses, of his Pyrenean hound; to tell by her dress, her walk, her shoes, to what class a woman belonged; to study *écarté,* remember a few fashionable catchwords, and win by his sojourn in Parisian society the necessary authority to import later into his province a taste for tea and silver of an English fashion, and to obtain the right of despising everything around him for the rest of his days.

De Marsay had admitted him to his society in order to make use of him in the world,

just as a bold speculator employs a confidential clerk. The friendship, real or feigned, of De Marsay was a social position for Paul de Manerville, who, on his side, thought himself astute in exploiting, after his fashion, his intimate friend. He lived in the reflecting lustre of his friend, walked constantly under his umbrella, wore his boots, gilded himself with his rays. When he posed in Henri's company or walked at his side, he had the air of saying: "Don't insult us, we are real dogs." He often permitted himself to remark fatuously: "If I were to ask Henri for such and such a thing, he is a good enough friend of mine to do it." But he was careful never to ask anything of him. He feared him, and his fear, although imperceptible, reacted upon the others, and was of use to De Marsay.

"De Marsay is a man of a thousand," said Paul. "Ah, you will see, he will be what he likes. I should not be surprised to find him one of these days minister of foreign affairs. Nothing can withstand him."

He made of De Marsay what Corporal Trim made of his cap, a perpetual instance.

"Ask De Marsay and you will see!"

Or again:

"The other day we were hunting, De Marsay and I, he would not believe me, but I jumped a hedge without moving on my horse!"

Or again:

"We were with some women, De Marsay and I, and, upon my word of honour, I was . . ." etc.

Thus Paul de Manerville could not be classed amongst the great, illustrious and powerful family of fools who succeed. He would one day be a deputy. For the time he was not even a young man. His friend, De Marsay, defined him thus: "You ask me what is Paul? Paul? Why, Paul de Manerville!"

"I am surprised, my dear fellow," he said to De Marsay, "to see you here on a Sunday."

"I was going to ask you the same question."

"Is it an intrigue?"

"An intrigue."

"Bah!"

"I can mention it to you without compromising my passion. Besides, a woman who comes to the Tuileries on Sundays is of no account, aristocratically speaking."

"Ah! ah!"

"Hold your tongue then, or I shall tell you nothing. Your laugh is too loud, you will make people think that we have lunched too well. Last Thursday, here on the Terrasse des Feuillants, I was walking along, thinking of nothing at all, but when I got to the gate of the Rue de Castiglione, by which I intended to leave, I came face to face with a woman, or rather with a young girl; who, if she did not throw herself at my head, stopped short, less, I think, from human respect, than from one of those movements of profound surprise which affect the limbs, creep down the length of the spine, and cease only in the sole of the feet, to nail you to the ground. I have often produced effects of this nature, a sort of animal magnetism which becomes enormously powerful when the relations are reciprocally precise. But, my dear fellow, this was not stupefaction, nor was she a common girl. Morally speaking, her face seemed to say: 'What, it is you, my ideal! The creation of my thoughts, of my morning and evening dreams! What, are you there? Why, this morning? Why not yesterday? Take me, I am thine, *et cetera!*' Good, I said

to myself, another one! Then I scrutinise her. Ah, my dear fellow, speaking physically, my incognita is the most adorable feminine person whom I ever met. She belongs to that feminine variety which the Romans call *fulva, flava*—the woman of fire. And in chief, what struck me the most, what I am still taken with, are her two yellow eyes, like a tiger's, a golden yellow that gleams, living gold, gold which thinks, gold which loves, and is determined to take refuge in your pocket."

"My dear fellow, we are full of her!" cried Paul. "She comes here sometimes—*the girl with the golden eyes!* That is the name we have given her. She is a young creature—not more than twenty-two, and I have seen her here in the time of the Bourbons, but with a woman who was worth a hundred thousand of her."

"Silence, Paul! It is impossible for any woman to surpass this girl; she is like the cat who rubs herself against your legs; a white girl with dusk coloured hair, delicate in appearance, but who must have downy threads on the third phalanx of her fingers, and all along her cheeks a white down whose

line, luminous on fine days, begins at her ears and loses itself on her neck."

"Ah, the other, my dear De Marsay! She has black eyes which have never wept, but which burn; black eyebrows which meet and give her an air of hardness contradicted by the compact curve of her lips, on which the kisses do not stay, lips burning and fresh; a Moorish colour that warms a man like the sun. But—upon my word of honour, she is like you!"

"You flatter her!"

"A firm figure, the tapering figure of a corvette built for speed, which rushes down upon the merchant vessel with French impetuosity, which grapples with her and sinks her at the same time."

"After all, my dear fellow," answered De Marsay, "what has that got to do with me, since I have never seen her? Ever since I have studied women, my incognita is the only one whose virginal bosom, whose ardent and voluptuous forms, have realised for me the only woman of my dreams—of my dreams! She is the original of that ravishing picture called *La Femme Caressant sa Chimère*,

the warmest, the most infernal inspiration of the genius of antiquity: a holy poem prostituted by those who have copied it for frescoes and mosaics; for a heap of bourgeois who see in this gem nothing more than a gew-gaw and hang it on their watch-chains—whereas, it is the whole woman, an abyss of pleasure into which one plunges and finds no end; whereas, it is the ideal woman, to be seen sometimes in reality in Spain or Italy, almost never in France. Well, I have again seen this girl of the gold eyes, this woman caressing her chimera. I saw her on Friday. I had a presentiment that on the following day she would be here at the same hour; I was not mistaken. I have taken a pleasure in following her without being observed, in studying her indolent walk, the walk of the woman without occupation, but in the movements of which one divines all the pleasure that lies asleep. Well, she turned back again, she saw me, once more she adored me, once more trembled, shivered. It was then I noticed the genuine Spanish duenna who looked after her, an hyena upon whom some jealous man has put a dress, a she-devil well paid, no

doubt, to guard this delicious creature . . . Ah, then the duenna made me deeper in love. I grew curious. On Saturday, nobody. And here I am to-day waiting for this girl whose chimera I am, asking nothing better than to pose as the monster in the fresco."

"There she is," said Paul. "Everyone is turning round to look at her."

The unknown blushed, her eyes shone, as she saw Henri, she shut them and passed by.

"You say that she notices you?" cried Paul, facetiously.

The duenna looked fixedly and attentively at the two young men. When the unknown and Henri passed each other again, the young girl touched him, and with her hand pressed the hand of the young man. Then she turned her head and smiled with passion, but the duenna led her away very quickly to the gate of the Rue de Castiglione.

The two friends followed the young girl, admiring the magnificent grace of the neck which met her head in a harmony of vigorous lines, and upon which a few coils of hair were tightly wound. The girl with the golden eyes had that well-knitted, arched,

slender foot which presents so many attractions to the dainty imagination. Moreover, she was shod with elegance, and wore a short skirt. During her course she turned from time to time to look at Henri, and appeared to follow the old woman regretfully, seeming to be at once her mistress and her slave: she could break her with blows, but could not dismiss her. All that was perceptible. The two friends reached the gate. Two men in livery let down the step of a tasteful *coupé* emblazoned with armorial bearings. The girl with the golden eyes was the first to enter it, took her seat at the side where she could be best seen when the carriage turned, put her hand on the door and waved her handkerchief in the duenna's despite. In contempt of what might be said by the curious, her handkerchief cried to Henri openly: "Follow me!"

"Have you ever seen the handkerchief better thrown?" said Henri to Paul de Manerville.

Then, observing a fiacre on the point of departure, having just set down a fare, he made a sign to the driver to wait.

"Follow that carriage, notice the house

and the street where it stops—you shall have ten francs . . . . Paul, adieu."

The cab followed the *coupé*. The *coupé* stopped in the Rue Saint Lazare before one of the finest houses of the neighbourhood.

De Marsay was not impulsive. Any other young man would have obeyed his impulse to obtain at once some information about a girl who realised so fully the most luminous ideas ever expressed upon women in the poetry of the East; but, too experienced to compromise his good fortune, he had told his coachman to continue along the Rue Saint Lazare and carry him back to his house. The next day, his confidential valet, Laurent by name, as cunning a fellow as the Frontin of the old comedy, waited in the vicinity of the house inhabited by the unknown for the hour at which letters were distributed. In order to be able to spy at his ease and hang about the house, he had followed the example of those police officers who seek a good disguise, and bought up cast-off clothes of an Auvergnat, the appearance of whom he sought to imitate. When the postman, who went the round of the Rue Saint Lazare that morning, passed

by, Laurent feigned to be a porter unable to remember the name of a person to whom he had to deliver a parcel, and consulted the postman. Deceived at first by appearances, this personage, so picturesque in the midst of Parisian civilisation, informed him that the house in which the girl with the golden eyes dwelt, belonged to Don Hijos, Marquis de San Réal, Grandee of Spain. Naturally, it was not with the Marquis that the Auvergnat was concerned.

"My parcel," he said, "is for the Marquise."

"She is away," replied the postman. "Her letters are forwarded to London."

"Then the Marquise is not a young girl who . . . ?"

"Ah!" said the postman, interrupting the *valet de chambre* and observing him attentively, "you are as much a porter as I'm . . . ."

Laurent chinked some pieces of gold before the functionary, who began to smile.

"Come, here's the name of your quarry," he said, taking from his leather wallet a letter bearing a London stamp upon which the address: "To Mademoiselle Paquita Valdès, Rue Saint Lazare, Hotel San Réal, Paris,"

was written in long, fine characters, which spoke of a woman's hand.

"Could you tap a bottle of Chablis, with a few dozen oysters, and a *filet sauté* with mushrooms to follow it?" said Laurent, who wished to win the postman's valuable friendship.

"At half-past nine, when my round is finished . . . . Where?"

"At the corner of the Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin and the Rue Neuve-des-Mathurins, at the *Puits sans Vin,*" said Laurent.

"Hark ye, my friend," said the postman, when he rejoined the valet an hour after this encounter, "if your master is in love with the girl, he is in for a famous task. I doubt you'll not succeed in seeing her. In the ten years that I've been postman in Paris, I have seen plenty of different kinds of doors! But I can tell you, and no fear of being called a liar by any of my comrades, there never was a door so mysterious as M. de San Réal's. No one can get into the house without the Lord knows what counter-word; and notice, it has been selected on purpose between a court-yard and a garden to avoid any communication with other houses. The porter is an

old Spaniard, who never speaks a word of French, but peers at people, as Vidocq might, to see if they are not thieves. If a lover, a thief, or you — I make no comparisons — could get the better of this first wicket, well, in the first hall, which is shut by a glazed door, you would run across a butler surrounded by lackeys, an old joker more savage and surly even than the porter. If anyone gets past the porter's lodge, my butler comes out, waits for you at the entrance and puts you through a cross-examination like a criminal. That has happened to me, a mere postman. He took me for an eavesdropper in disguise, he said, laughing at his nonsense. As for the servants, don't hope to get aught out of them, I think they are mutes, no one in the neighbourhood knows the colour of their speech; I don't know what wages they can pay them to keep them from talk and drink; the fact is, they are not to be got at, whether because they are afraid of being shot, or that they have some enormous sum to lose in the case of an indiscretion. If your master is fond enough of Mademoiselle Paquita Valdès to surmount all these obsta-

cles, he certainly won't triumph over Doña Concha Marialva, the duenna who accompanies her and would put her under her petticoats sooner than leave her. The two women look as if they were sewn to one another."

"All that you say, worthy postman," went on Laurent, after having drunk off his wine, "confirms me in what I have learnt before. Upon my word, I thought they were making fun of me! The fruiterer opposite told me that of nights they let loose dogs whose food is hung up on stakes just out of their reach. These cursed animals think, therefore, that anyone likely to come in has designs on their victuals, and would tear one to pieces. You will tell me one might throw them down pieces, but it seems they have been trained to touch nothing except from the hand of the porter."

"The porter of the Baron de Nucingen, whose garden joins at the top that of the Hotel San-Réal told me the same thing," replied the postman.

"Good! my master knows him," said Laurent, to himself. "Do you know," he went on, leering at the postman, "I serve a master who is a rare man, and if he took it

into his head to kiss the sole of the foot of an Empress she would have to give in to him? If he had need of you, which is what I wish for you, for he is generous, could one count on you?"

"Lord, Monsieur Laurent, my name is Moinot. My name is written exactly like *Moineau,* mag-pie: M-o-i-n-o-t, Moinot."

"Exactly," said Laurent.

"I live at No. 11, Rue des Trois Frères, on the fifth floor," went on Moinot, "I have a wife and four children. If what you want of me doesn't transgress the limits of my conscience and my official duties, you understand! I am your man."

"You are an honest fellow," said Laurent, shaking his hand.

"Paquita Valdès is, no doubt the mistress of the Marquis de San-Réal, the friend of King Ferdinand. Only an old Spanish mummy of eighty years is capable of taking such precautions," said Henri, when his *valet de chambre* had related the result of his researches.

"Monsieur," said Laurent, "unless he takes a balloon no one can get into that hotel."

"You are a fool! Is it necessary to get into

the hotel to have Paquita, when Paquita can get out of it!"

"But, Sir, the duenna?"

"We will shut her up for a day or two, your duenna."

"So, we shall have Paquita!" said Laurent rubbing his hands.

"Rascal!" answered Henri, "I shall condemn you to the Concha, if you carry your impudence so far as to speak so of a woman before she has become mine . . . Turn your thoughts to dressing me, I am going out."

Henri remained for a moment plunged in joyous reflections. Let us say it to the praise of women, he obtained all those whom he deigned to desire. And what could one think of a woman, having no lover, who should have known how to resist a young man armed with beauty which is the intelligence of the body, with intelligence which is a grace of the soul, armed with moral force and fortune, which are the only two real powers? Yet, in triumphing with such ease, De Marsay was bound to grow weary of his triumphs; thus, for about two years he had grown very weary indeed. And diving deep

into the sea of pleasures he brought back more grit than pearls. Thus had he come, like potentates, to implore of Chance some obstacle to surmount, some enterprise which should ask the employment of his dormant moral and physical strength. Although Paquita Valdès presented him with a marvellous concentration of perfections which he had only yet enjoyed in detail, the attraction of passion was almost *nil* with him. Constant satiety had weakened in his heart the sentiment of love. Like old men and people disillusioned he had no longer anything but extravagant caprices, ruinous tastes, fantasies, which, once satisfied, left no pleasant memory in his heart. Amongst young people love is the finest of the emotions, it makes the life of the soul blossom, it nourishes by its solar power the finest inspirations and their great thoughts: the first fruits in all things have a delicious savour. Amongst men love becomes a passion: strength leads to abuse. Amongst old men it turns to vice, impotence tends to extremes. Henri was at once an old man, a man and a youth. To afford him the feelings of a real love, he needed, like Lovelace, a Clarissa Harlowe. Without the magic lustre

of that unattainable pearl he could only have, either passions rendered acute by some Parisian vanity, or set determinations with himself to bring such and such a woman to such and such a point of corruption, or else adventures which stimulated his curiosity.

The report of Laurent, his *valet de chambre,* had just given an enormous value to the girl with the golden eyes. It was a question of doing battle with some secret enemy who seemed as dangerous as he was cunning; and to carry off the victory, all the forces which Henri could dispose of would be useful. He was about to play in that eternal old comedy which will be always fresh, and the characters in which are an old man, a young girl, and a lover: Don Hijos, Paquita, De Marsay. If Laurent was the equal of Figaro, the duenna seemed incorruptible. Thus, the living play was supplied by Chance with a stronger plot than it had ever been by dramatic author! But then is not Chance, too, a man of genius?

"It must be a cautious game," said Henri, to himself.

"Well," said Paul de Manerville, as he entered the room. "How are we getting on?

I have come to breakfast with you."

"So be it," said Henri. "You won't be shocked if I make my toilette before you?"

"How absurd!"

"We take so many things from the English just now that we might well become as great prudes and hypocrites as themselves," said Henri.

Laurent had set before his master such a quantity of utensils, so many different articles of such elegance, that Paul could not refrain from saying:

"But you will take a couple of hours over that?"

"No!" said Henri, "two hours and a half."

"Well, then, since we are by ourselves, and can say what we like, explain to me why a man as superior as yourself—for you are superior—should affect to exaggerate a foppery which cannot be natural. Why spend two hours and a half in adorning yourself, when it is sufficient to spend a quarter of an hour in your bath, to do your hair in two minutes, and to dress? There, tell me your system."

"I must be very fond of you, my good dunce, to confide such high thoughts to you,"

said the young man, who was at that moment having his feet rubbed with a soft brush lathered with English soap.

"Have I not the most devoted attachment to you," replied Paul de Manerville, "and do I not like you because I know your superiority? . . ."

"You must have noticed, if you are in the least capable of observing any moral fact, that women love fops," went on De Marsay, without replying in any way to Paul's declaration except by a look. "Do you know why women love fops? My friend, fops are the only men who take care of themselves. Now, to take excessive care of oneself, does it not imply that one takes care in oneself of what belongs to another? The man who does not belong to himself is precisely the man on whom women are keen. Love is essentially a thief. I say nothing about that excess of niceness to which they are so devoted. Do you know of any woman who has had a passion for a sloven, even if he were a remarkable man? If such a fact has occurred, we must put it to the account of those morbid affections of the breeding woman,

mad fancies which float through the minds of everybody. On the other hand, I have seen most remarkable people left in the lurch because of their carelessness. A fop, who is concerned about his person, is concerned with folly, with petty things. And what is a woman? A petty thing, a bundle of follies. With two words said to the winds, can you not make her busy for four hours? She is sure that the fop will be occupied with her, seeing that he has no mind for great things. She will never be neglected for glory, ambition, politics, art—those prostitutes who for her are rivals. Then fops have the courage to cover themselves with ridicule in order to please a woman, and her heart is full of gratitude towards the man who is ridiculous for love. In fine, a fop can be no fop unless he is right in being one. It is women who bestow that rank. The fop is love's colonel; he has his victories, his regiment of women at his command. My dear fellow, in Paris everything is known, and a man cannot be a fop there *gratis*. You, who have only one woman, and who, perhaps, are right to have but one, try to act the fop! . . . You will not

even become ridiculous, you will be dead. You will become a foregone conclusion, one of those men condemned inevitably to do one and the same thing. You will come to signify *folly* as inseparably as M. de La Fayette signifies *America;* M. de Talleyrand, *diplomacy;* Désaugiers, *song;* M. de Ségur, *romance.* If they once forsake their own line people no longer attach any value to what they do. So, foppery, my friend Paul, is the sign of an incontestable power over the female folk. A man, who is loved by many women, passes for having superior qualities, and then, poor fellow, it is a question who shall have him! But do you think it is nothing to have the right of going into a drawing-room, of looking down at people from over your cravat. or through your eye-glass, and of despising the most superior of men should he wear an old-fashioned waistcoat. . . Laurent, you are hurting me! After breakfast, Paul, we will go to the Tuileries and see the adorable girl with the golden eyes."

When, after making an excellent meal, the two young men had traversed the Terrasse des Feuillants and the broad walk of the

Tuileries, they nowhere discovered the sublime Paquita Valdès, on whose account some fifty of the most elegant young men in Paris were to be seen, all scented, with their high scarves, spurred and booted, riding, walking, talking, laughing, and damning themselves mightily.

"It's a white Mass," said Henri; "but I have the most excellent idea in the world. This girl receives letters from London. The postman must be bought or made drunk, a letter opened, read of course, and a love-letter slipped in before it is sealed up again. The old tyrant, *crudel tirano,* is certain to know the person who writes the letters from London, and has ceased to be suspicious of them."

The day after, De Marsay came again to walk on the Terrasse des Feuillants, and saw Paquita Valdès; already passion had embellished her for him. Seriously, he was wild for those eyes, whose rays seemed akin to those which the sun emits, and whose ardour set the seal upon that of her perfect body, in which all was delight. De Marsay was on fire to brush the dress of this enchanting girl as they passed one another

in their walk; but his attempts were always vain. But at one moment, when he had repassed Paquita and the duenna, in order to find himself on the same side as the girl of the golden eyes, when he returned, Paquita, no less impatient, came forward hurriedly, and De Marsay felt his hand pressed by her in a fashion at once so swift and so passionately significant that it was as though he had received the shock of an electric current. In an instant all his youthful emotions surged up in his heart. When the two lovers glanced at one another, Paquita seemed ashamed, she dropped her eyes lest she should meet the eyes of Henri, but her gaze sank lower to fasten on the feet and form of him whom women, before the Revolution, called *their conqueror.*

"I am determined to make this girl my mistress," said Henri to himself.

As he followed her along the terrace, in the direction of the Place Louis XV., he caught sight of the aged Marquis de San-Réal, who was walking on the arm of his valet, stepping with all the precautions due to gout and decrepitude. Doña Concha, who distrusted Henri, made Paquita pass between

herself and the old man.

"Oh, for you," said De Marsay, to himself, casting a glance of disdain upon the duenna; "if one cannot make you capitulate, with a little opium one can make you sleep. We know mythology and the fable of Argus."

Before entering the carriage, the golden-eyed girl exchanged certain glances with her lover, of which the meaning was unmistakeable and which enchanted Henri, but one of them was surprised by the duenna; she said a few rapid words to Paquita, who threw herself into the *coupé* with an air of desperation. For some days Paquita did not appear in the Tuileries. Laurent, who by his master's orders was on watch by the hotel, learned from the neighbours that neither the two women nor the aged Marquis had been abroad since the day upon which the duenna had surprised a glance between the young girl in her charge and Henri. The bond, so flimsy withal, which united the two lovers, was already severed.

Some days later, none knew by what means, De Marsay had attained his end: he had a seal and wax, exactly resembling the seal and the

wax affixed to the letters sent to Mademoiselle Valdès from London; paper similar to that which her correspondent used; moreover, all the implements and stamps necessary to affix the French and English postmarks.

He wrote the following letter, to which he gave all the appearances of a letter sent from London:

"My dear Paquita.—I shall not try to paint to you in words the passion with which you have inspired me. If, to my happiness, you reciprocate it, understand that I have found a means of corresponding with you. My name is Adolphe de Gouges, and I live at No. 54, Rue de l'Université. If you are too closely watched to be able to write to me, if you have neither pen nor paper, I shall understand it by your silence. If then, tomorrow, you have not, between eight o'clock in the morning and ten o'clock in the evening, thrown a letter over the wall of your garden into that of the Baron de Nucingen, where it will be waited for during the whole of the day, a man who is entirely devoted to me, will let down two flasks by a string over your wall at ten o'clock the next morning. Be walking there at that hour. One of the two flasks will contain opium to send your Argus to sleep; it will be sufficient to employ six drops; the other will contain ink. The flask of ink is of cut glass; the other is plain. Both are of such a size as can easily be con-

cealed within your bosom. All that I have already done, in order to be able to correspond with you, should tell you how greatly I love you. Should you have any doubt of it, I will confess to you, that to obtain an interview of one hour with you I would give my life."

"At least they believe that, poor creatures!" said De Marsay; "but they are right. What should we think of a woman who refused to be beguiled by a love-letter accompanied by such convincing accessories?"

This letter was delivered by Master Moinot, postman, on the following day, about eight o'clock in the morning, to the porter of the Hotel San-Réal.

In order to be nearer to the field of action, De Marsay went and breakfasted with Paul, who lived in the Rue de la Pépinière. At two o'clock, just as the two friends were laughingly discussing the discomfiture of a young man who had attempted to lead the life of fashion without a settled income, and were devising an end for him, Henri's coachman came to seek his master at Paul's house, and presented to him a mysterious personage who insisted on speaking himself with his master.

This individual was a mulatto, who would assuredly have given Talma a model for the part of Othello, if he had come across him. Never did any African face better express the grand vengefulness, the ready suspicion, the promptitude in the execution of a thought, the strength of the Moor and his childish lack of reflection. His black eyes had the fixity of the eyes of a bird of prey, and they were framed, like a vulture's, by a bluish membrane devoid of lashes. His forehead, low and narrow, had something menacing. Evidently, this man was under the yoke of some single and unique thought. His sinewy arm did not belong to him.

He was followed by a man whom the imaginations of all folk, from those who shiver in Greenland to those who sweat in the tropics, would paint in the single phrase: *He was an unfortunate man.* From this phrase, everybody will conceive him according to the special ideas of each country. But who can best imagine his face—white and wrinkled, red at the extremities, and his long beard? Who will see his lean and yellow scarf, his greasy shirt collar, his battered hat, his green frock coat, his deplorable trousers, his dilapi-

dated waistcoat, his imitation gold pin, and battered shoes, the strings of which were plastered in mud? Who will see all that but the Parisian? The unfortunate man of Paris is the unfortunate man *in toto*, for he has still enough mirth to know the extent of his misfortune. The mulatto was like an executioner of Louis XI. leading a man to the gallows.

"Who has hunted us out these two extraordinary creatures?" said Henri.

"Faith! There is one of them who makes me shudder," replied Paul.

"Who are you—you fellow who look the most like a Christian of the two?" said Henri, looking at the unfortunate man.

The mulatto stood with his eyes fixed upon the two young men, like a man who understood nothing, and who sought no less to divine something from the gestures and movements of the lips.

"I am a public scribe and interpreter; I live at the Palais de Justice, and am named Poincet."

"Good! . . . and this one?" said Henri to Poincet, looking towards the mulatto.

"I do not know; he only speaks a sort of

Spanish *patois,* and he has brought me here to make himself understood by you."

The mulatto drew from his pocket the letter which Henri had written to Paquita and handed it to him. Henri threw it in the fire.

"Ah--so--the game is beginning," said Henri to himself. "Paul, leave us alone a moment."

"I translated this letter for him," went on the interpreter, when they were alone. "When it was translated, he was in some place which I don't remember. Then he came back to look for me, and promised me two *louis* to fetch him here."

"What have you got to say to me, nigger?" asked Henri.

"I did not translate *nigger,*" said the interpreter, waiting for the mulatto's reply.

"He said, sir," went on the interpreter, after having listened to the unknown, "that you must be at half-past ten to-morrow night on the Boulevard Montmartre, near the café. You will see a carriage there, in which you must take your place, saying to the man, who will wait to open the door for you, the word *cortejo*—a Spanish word, which means *lover,*" added Poincet, casting a glance of

congratulation upon Henri.

"Good."

The mulatto was about to bestow the two *louis,* but De Marsay would not permit it, and himself rewarded the interpreter. As he was paying him, the mulatto began to speak.

"What is he saying?"

"He is warning me," replied the unfortunate, "that if I commit a single indiscretion he will strangle me. He speaks fair and he looks remarkably as if he were capable of carrying out his threat."

"I am sure of it," answered Henri; "he would keep his word."

"He says, as well," replied the interpreter, "that the person from whom he is sent implores you, for your sake and for hers, to act with the greatest prudence, because the daggers which are raised above your head would strike your heart before any human power could save you from them."

"He said that? So much the better, it will be more amusing. You can come in now, Paul," he cried to his friend.

The mulatto, who had not ceased to gaze at the lover of Paquita Valdès with magnetic

attention, went away, followed by the interpreter.

"Well, at last I have an adventure which is entirely romantic," said Henri, when Paul returned. "After having shared in a certain number I have finished by finding in Paris an intrigue accompanied by serious accidents, by grave perils. The deuce! what courage danger gives a woman! To torment a woman, to try and contradict her—doesn't it give her the right and the courage to scale in one moment obstacles which it would take her years to surmount of herself? Pretty creature, jump then! To die? Poor child! Daggers? Oh, imagination of women! They cannot help trying to find authority for their little jests. Besides, can one think of it, Paquita? Can one think of it, my child? The devil take me, now that I know this beautiful girl, this masterpiece of nature, is mine, the adventure has lost its charm."

For all his light words, the youth in Henri had reappeared. In order to live until the morrow without too much pain, he had recourse to exorbitant pleasure: he played, dined, supped with his friends; he drank like

a fish, ate like a German, and won ten or twelve thousand francs. He left the Rocher de Cancale at two o'clock in the morning, slept like a child, awoke the next morning fresh and rosy, and dressed to go to the Tuileries, with the intention of taking a ride, after having seen Paquita, in order to get himself an appetite and dine the better, and so kill the time.

At the hour mentioned Henri was on the Boulevard, saw the carriage, and gave the counterword to a man who looked to him like the mulatto. Hearing the word, the man opened the door and quickly let down the step. Henri was so rapidly carried through Paris, and his thoughts left him so little capacity to pay attention to the streets through which he passed, that he did not know where the carriage stopped. The mulatto let him into a house, the staircase of which was quite close to the entrance. This staircase was dark, as was also the landing upon which Henri was obliged to wait while the mulatto was opening the door of a damp apartment, fetid and unlit, the chambers of which, barely illuminated by the candle which his guide

found in the antechamber, seemed to him empty and ill furnished, like those of a house the inhabitants of which are away. He recognised the sensation which he had experienced from the perusal of one of those romances of Anne Radcliffe, in which the hero traverses the cold, sombre and uninhabited saloons of some sad and desert spot.

At last the mulatto opened the door of a *salon*. The condition of the old furniture and the dilapidated curtains with which the room was adorned gave it the air of the reception room of a house of ill fame. There was the same pretension to elegance, and the same collection of things in bad taste, of dust and dirt. Upon a sofa covered with red Utrecht velvet, by the side of a smoking hearth, the fire of which was buried in ashes, sat an old, poorly dressed woman, her head capped by one of those turbands which English women of a certain age have invented, and which would have a mighty success in China, where the artist's ideal is the monstrous.

The room, the old woman, the cold hearth, all would have chilled love to death had not Paquita been there, upon an ottoman, in a

loose voluptuous wrapper, free to scatter her gaze of gold and flame, free to show her arched foot, free of her luminous movements. This first interview was what every first *rendez-vous* must be between persons of passionate disposition, who have stepped over a wide distance quickly, who desire each other ardently, and who, nevertheless, do not know each other. It is impossible that at first there should not occur certain discordant notes in the situation, which is embarrassing until the moment when two souls find themselves in unison.

If desire gives a man boldness and disposes him to lay restraint aside, the mistress, under pain of ceasing to be woman, however great may be her love, is afraid of arriving at the end so promptly, and face to face with the necessity of giving herself, which to many women is equivalent to a fall into an abyss, at the bottom of which they know not what they shall find. The involuntary coldness of the woman contrasts with her confessed passion, and necessarily reacts upon the most passionate lover. Thus ideas, which often float around souls like vapours, determine in them a sort of temporary malady. In the

sweet journey which two beings undertake through the fair domains of love, this moment is like a waste land to be traversed, a land without a tree, alternatively damp and warm, full of scorching sand, traversed by marshes, which leads to smiling groves clad with roses, where love and his retinue of pleasures disport themselves on carpets of soft verdure. Often the witty man finds himself afflicted with a foolish laugh which is his only answer to everything; his wit is, as it were, suffocated beneath the icy pressure of his desires. It would not be impossible for two beings of equal beauty, intelligence and passion, to utter at first nothing but the most silly commonplaces, until chance, a word, the tremor of a certain glance, the communication of a spark, should have brought them to the happy transition which leads to that flowery way in which one does not walk, but where one sways and at the same time does not lapse.

Such a state of mind is always in proportion with the violence of the feeling. Two creatures who love one another weakly feel nothing similar. The effect of this crisis can even be compared with that which is pro-

duced by the glow of a clear sky. Nature, at the first view, appears to be covered with a gauze veil, the azure of the firmament seems black, the intensity of light is like darkness. With Henri, as with the Spanish girl, there was an equal intensity of feeling: and that law of statics, in virtue of which two identical forces cancel each other, might have been true also in the moral order. And the embarrassment of that moment was singularly increased by the presence of the old hag. Love takes pleasure or fright at all, all has a meaning for it, everything is an omen of happiness or sorrow for it.

This decrepid woman was there like a suggestion of catastrophe, and represented the horrid fish's tail with which the allegorical geniuses of Greece have terminated their chimeras and sirens, whose figures, like all passions, are so seductive, so deceptive.

Although Henri was not a free-thinker—the phrase is always a mockery—but a man of extraordinary power, a man as great as a man can be without faith, the conjunction struck him. Moreover, the strongest men are naturally the most impressionable, and con-

sequently the most superstitious, if, indeed, one may call superstition the prejudice of first thoughts, which, without doubt, is the appreciation of the result in causes hidden to other eyes but perceptible to their own.

The Spanish girl profited by this moment of stupefaction to let herself fall into the ecstasy of that infinite adoration which seizes the heart of a woman, when she truly loves and finds herself in the presence of an idol for whom she has vainly longed. Her eyes were all joy, all happiness, and sparks flew from them. She was under the charm, and fearlessly intoxicated herself with a felicity of which she had dreamed long. She seemed then so marvellously beautiful to Henri, that all this phantasmagoria of rags and old age, of worn red drapery and of the green mats in front of the arm chairs, the ill-washed red tiles, all this sick and dilapidated luxury, disappeared.

The room seemed lit up; and it was only through a cloud that one could see the fearful harpy fixed and dumb on her red sofa, her yellow eyes betraying the servile sentiments, inspired by misfortune, or caused by some vice beneath whose servitude one has

fallen as beneath a tyrant who brutalises one with the flagellations of his despotism. Her eyes had the cold glitter of a caged tiger, knowing his impotence and being compelled to swallow his rage of destruction.

"Who is that woman!" said Henri to Paquita.

But Paquita did not answer. She made a sign that she understood no French, and asked Henri if he spoke English.

De Marsay repeated his question in English.

"She is the only woman in whom I can confide, although she has sold me already," said Paquita tranquilly. "My dear Adolphe, she is my mother, a slave bought in Georgia for her rare beauty, little enough of which remains to-day. She only speaks her native tongue."

The attitude of this woman and her eagerness to guess from the gestures of her daughter and Henri what was passing between them, were suddenly explained to the young man; and this explanation put him at his ease.

"Paquita," he said, "are we never to be free then?"

"Never," she said, with an air of sadness. "Even now we have but a few days before us."

She lowered her eyes, looked at and counted

with her right hand on the fingers of her left, revealing so the most beautiful hands which Henri had ever seen.

"One, two, three—" . . .

She counted up to twelve.

"Yes," she said, "we have twelve days."

"And after?"

"After," she said, showing the absorption of a weak woman before the executioner's axe, and slain in advance, as it were, by a fear which stripped her of that magnificent energy which nature seemed to have bestown upon her only to aggrandize pleasure and convert the most vulgar delights into endless poems. "After," . . . . she repeated. Her eyes took a fixed stare; she seemed to contemplate a threatening object far away.

"I do not know," she said.

"This girl is mad," said Henri to himself, falling into strange reflexions.

Paquita appeared to him occupied by something which was not himself, like a woman constrained equally by remorse and passion. Perhaps she had in her heart another love which she alternately remembered and forgot. In a moment Henri was assailed by a

thousand contradictory thoughts. This girl became a mystery for him; but as he contemplated her with the scientific attention of the *blasé* man, famished for new pleasures, like that Eastern king who asked that a pleasure should be created for him—a horrible thirst with which great souls are seized—Henri recognised in Paquita the richest organisation that nature had ever deigned to compose for love. The presumptive play of this machinery, setting aside the soul, would have frightened any other man than Henri; but he was fascinated by that rich harvest of promised pleasures, by that constant variety in happiness, the dream of every man, and the desire of every loving woman too. He was infuriated by the infinite rendered palpable, and transported into the most excessive raptures of which the creature is capable. All that he saw in this girl more distinctly than he had yet seen it, for she let herself be viewed complacently, happy to be admired. The admiration of De Marsay became a secret fury, and he unveiled her completely, throwing a glance at her which the Spaniard understood as though she had been used to receive such.

"If you are not to be mine, mine only, I will kill you!" he cried.

Hearing this speech, Paquita covered her face in her hands, and cried, naïvely—

"Holy Virgin! What have I brought upon myself?"

She rose, flung herself down upon the red sofa, and buried her head in the rags which covered the bosom of her mother, and wept there. The old woman received her daughter without issuing from her state of immobility, or displaying any emotion. The mother possessed in the highest degree that gravity of savage races, the impassiveness of a statue upon which all remarks are lost. Did she or did she not love her daughter? Beneath that mask every human emotion might brood—good and evil; and from this creature all might be expected. Her gaze passed slowly from her daughter's beautiful hair, which covered her like a mantle, to the face of Henri, which she considered with an indescribable curiosity.

She seemed to ask by what fatality he was there, from what caprice Nature had made so seductive a man.

"These women are making sport of me," said Henri to himself.

At that moment Paquita raised her head, cast at him one of those looks which reach the very soul and consume it. So beautiful seemed she that he swore he would possess such a treasure of beauty.

"My Paquita! Be mine!"

"Wouldst thou kill me?" she said, fearfully, palpitating and anxious, but drawn towards him by an inexplicable force.

"Kill thee—I!" he said, smiling.

Paquita uttered a cry of alarm, said a word to the old woman, who authoritatively seized Henri's hand and that of her daughter. She gazed at them for a long time, and then released them, wagging her head in a fashion horribly significant.

"Be mine—this evening, this moment; follow me, do not leave me! It must be, Paquita! Dost thou love me? Come!"

In a moment he had poured out a thousand foolish words to her, with the rapidity of a torrent coursing between the rocks, and repeating the same sound in a thousand different forms.

"It is the same voice!" said Paquita in a melancholy voice, which De Marsay could not overhear, "and the same ardour," she added. "So be it—yes," she said, with an abandonment of passion which no words can describe. "Yes; but not to-night. To-night, Adolphe, I gave too little opium to La Concha. She might wake up, and I should be lost. At this moment the whole household believes me to be asleep in my room. In two days be at the same spot, say the same word to the same man. That man is my foster-father. Cristemio worships me, and would die in torments for me before they could extract one word against me from him. Farewell," she said, seizing Henri by the waist and twining round him like a serpent.

She pressed him on every side at once, lifted her head to his, and offered him her lips, then snatched a kiss which filled them both with such a dizziness that it seemed to Henri as though the earth opened; and Paquita cried: "Enough, depart!" in a voice which told how little she was mistress of herself. But she clung to him still, still crying, "Depart!" and brought him slowly to the staircase. There the mulatto, whose white eyes lit up at the

sight of Paquita, took the torch from the hands of his idol, and conducted Henri to the street. He left the light under the arch, opened the door, put Henri into the carriage, and set him down on the Boulevard des Italiens with marvellous rapidity. It was as though the horses had hell-fire in their veins.

The scene was like a dream to De Marsay, but one of those dreams which, even when they fade away, leave a feeling of supernatural voluptuousness, which a man runs after for the remainder of his life. A single kiss had been enough. Never had *rendez-vous* been spent in a manner more decorous or chaste, or, perhaps, more coldly, in a spot of which the surroundings were more gruesome, in presence of a more hideous divinity; for the mother had remained in Henri's imagination like some infernal, cowering thing, cadaverous, monstrous, savagely ferocious, which the imagination of poets and painters had not yet conceived. In effect, no *rendez-vous* had ever irritated his senses more, revealed more audacious pleasures, or better aroused love from its centre to shed itself round him like an atmosphere. There was something sombre,

mysterious, sweet, tender, constrained and expansive, an intermingling of the awful and the celestial, of paradise and hell, which made De Marsay like a drunken man.

He was no longer himself, and he was, withal, great enough to be able to resist the intoxication of pleasure.

In order to render his conduct intelligible in the catastrophe of this story, it is needful to explain how his soul had broadened at an age when young men generally belittle themselves in their relations with women, or in too much occupation with them. Its growth was due to a concurrence of secret circumstances, which invested him with a vast and unsuspected power.

This young man held in his hand a sceptre more powerful than that of modern kings, almost all of whom are curbed in their least wishes by the laws. De Marsay exercised the autocratic power of an Oriental despot. But this power, so stupidly put into execution in Asia by brutish men, was increased tenfold by its conjunction with European intelligence, with French wit—the most subtle, the keenest of all intellectual instruments. Henri could do

what he would in the interest of his pleasures and vanities. This invisible action upon the social world had invested him with a real, but secret, majesty, without emphasis and deriving from himself. He had not the opinion which Louis XIV. could have of himself, but that which the proudest of the Caliphs, the Pharaohs, the Xerxes, who held themselves to be of divine origin, had of themselves when they imitated God, and veiled themselves from their subjects under the pretext that their looks dealt forth death. Thus, without any remorse at being at once the judge and the accuser, De Marsay coldly condemned to death the man or the woman who had seriously offended him. Although often pronounced almost lightly, the verdict was irrevocable. An error was a misfortune similar to that which a thunderbolt causes when it falls upon a smiling Parisienne in some hackney coach, instead of crushing the old coachman who is driving her to a *rendez-vous*. Thus the bitter and profound sarcasm which distinguished the young man's conversation usually tended to frighten people; no one was anxious to put him out. Women are pro-

digiously fond of those persons who call themselves pachas, and who are, as it were, accompanied by lions and executioners, and who walk in a panoply of terror. The result, in the case of such men, is a security of action, a certitude of power, a pride of gaze, a leonine consciousness, which makes women realise the type of strength of which they all dream. Such was De Marsay.

Happy, for the moment, with his future, he grew young and pliable, and thought of nothing but love as he went to bed. He dreamed of the girl with the golden eyes, as the young and passionate can dream. His dreams were monstrous images, unattainable extravagances —full of light, revealing invisible worlds, yet in a manner always incomplete, for an intervening veil changes the conditions of vision.

For the next and succeeding day Henri disappeared, and no one knew what had become of him. His power only belonged to him under certain conditions, and, happily for him, during those two days he was a private soldier in the service of the demon to whom he owed his talismanic existence. But at the appointed time, in the evening, he was

waiting—and he had not long to wait—for the carriage. The mulatto approached Henri, in order to repeat to him in French a phrase which he seemed to have learned by heart.

"If you wish to come, she told me, you must consent to have your eyes bandaged."

And Cristemio then produced a white silk handkerchief.

"No!" said Henri, whose omnipotence revolted suddenly.

He tried to leap in. The mulatto made a sign, and the carriage drove off.

"Yes!" cried De Marsay, furious at the thought of losing a piece of good fortune which had been promised him.

He saw, moreover, the impossibility of making terms with a slave whose obedience was as blind as the hangman's. Nor was it this passive instrument upon whom his anger could fall.

The mulatto whistled, the carriage returned. Henri got in hastily. Already a few curious onlookers had assembled like sheep on the boulevard. Henri was strong; he tried to play the mulatto. When the carriage started at a gallop he seized his hands, in order to

master him, and retain, by subduing his attendant, the possession of his faculties, so that he might know whither he was going. It was a vain attempt. The eyes of the mulatto flashed from the darkness. The fellow uttered a cry which his fury stifled in his throat, released himself, threw back De Marsay with an hand like iron, and nailed him, so to speak, to the bottom of the carriage; then, with his free hand, he drew a triangular dagger, and whistled. The coachman heard the whistle and stopped. Henri was unarmed, he was forced to yield. He moved his head towards the handkerchief. The gesture of submission calmed Cristemio, and he bound his eyes with a respect and care which manifested a sort of veneration for the person of the man whom his idol loved. But, before taking this course, he had placed his dagger distrustfully in his side pocket, and buttoned himself up to the chin.

"That nigger would have killed me!" said De Marsay to himself.

Once more the carriage moved on rapidly. There was one resource still open to a young man who knew Paris as well as Henri. To know whither he was going, he had but to

collect himself and count, by the number of gutters crossed, the streets leading from the boulevards by which the carriage passed, so long as it continued straight along. He could thus discover into which lateral street it would turn, either towards the Seine or towards the heights of Montmartre, and guess the name or the position of the street in which his guide should bring him to an halt. But the violent emotion which his struggle had caused him, the rage into which his compromised dignity had thrown him, the ideas of vengeance to which he abandoned himself, the suppositions suggested to him by the circumstantial care which this girl had taken in order to bring him to her, all hindered him from that attention, which the blind have, necessary for the concentration of his intelligence and the perfect lucidity of his recollection. The journey lasted half an hour. When the carriage stopped, it was no longer on the street. The mulatto and the coachman took Henri in their arms, lifted him out, and, putting him into a sort of litter, conveyed him across a garden. He could smell its flowers and the perfume peculiar to trees and grass.

The silence which reigned there was so profound that he could distinguish the noise made by the drops of water falling from the moist leaves. The two men took him to a staircase, set him on his feet, led him by his hands through several apartments, and left him in a room, whose atmosphere was perfumed, and the thick carpet of which he could feel beneath his feet.

A woman's hand pushed him on to a divan, and untied the handkerchief for him. Henri saw Paquita before him, but Paquita in all her womanly and voluptuous glory. The section of the boudoir in which Henri found himself described a circular line, softly gracious, which was faced opposite by the other perfectly square half, in the midst of which a chimney-piece shone of gold and white marble. He had entered by a door on one side, hidden by a rich tapestried screen, opposite which was a window. The semicircular portion was adorned with a real Turkish divan, that is to say, a mattress thrown on the ground, but a mattress as broad as a bed, a divan fifty feet in circumference, made of white cashmere, relieved by bows of black

and scarlet silk, arranged in panels. The top of this huge bed was raised several inches by numerous cushions, which further enriched it by their tasteful comfort. The boudoir was lined with some red stuff, over which an Indian muslin was stretched, fluted after the fashion of Corinthian columns, in plaits going in and out, and bound at the top and bottom by bands of poppy-coloured stuff, on which were designs in black arabesque.

Below the muslin the poppy turned to rose, that amorous colour, which was matched by window curtains, which were of Indian muslin lined with rose-coloured taffeta, and set off with a fringe of poppy-colour and black. Six silver-gilt arms, each supporting two candles, were attached to the tapestry at an equal distance, to illuminate the divan. The ceiling, from the middle of which a lustre of unpolished silver hung, was of a brilliant whiteness, and the cornice was gilded. The carpet was like an Oriental shawl, it had the designs and recalled the poetry of Persia, where the hands of slaves had worked on it. The furniture was covered in white cashmere, relieved by black and poppy-coloured orna-

ments. The clock, the candelabra, all were in white marble and gold. The only table there had a cloth of cashmere. Elegant flower pots held roses of every kind, flowers white or red. In fine, the least detail seemed to have been the object of loving thought. Never had richness hidden itself more coquettishly to become elegance, to express grace, to inspire pleasure. Everything there would have warmed the coldest of beings. The caresses of the tapestry, of which the colour changed according to the direction of one's gaze, becoming either all white or all rose, harmonised with the effects of the light shed upon the diaphanous tissues of the muslin, which produced an appearance of mistiness. The soul has I know not what attraction towards white, love delights in red, and the passions are flattered by gold, which has the power of realising their caprices. Thus all that man possesses within him of vague and mysterious, all his inexplicable affinities were caressed in their involuntary sympathies. There was in this perfect harmony a concert of colour to which the soul responded with vague and voluptuous and fluctuating ideas.

It was out of a misty atmosphere, laden with exquisite perfumes, that Paquita, clad in a white wrapper, her feet bare, orange blossom in her black hair, appeared to Henri, knelt before him, adoring him as the god of this temple, whither he had deigned to come. Although De Marsay was accustomed to seeing the utmost efforts of Parisian luxury, he was surprised at the aspect of this shell, like that from which Venus rose out of the sea. Whether from an effect of contrast between the darkness from which he issued and the light which bathed his soul, whether from a comparison which he swiftly made between this scene and that of their first interview, he experienced one of those delicate sensations which true poetry gives. Perceiving in the midst of this retreat, which had been opened to him as by a fairy's magic wand, the masterpiece of creation, this girl, whose warmly coloured tints, whose soft skin—soft, but slightly gilded by the shadows, by I know not what vaporous effusion of love—gleamed as though it reflected the rays of colour and light, his anger, his desire for vengeance, his wounded vanity, all were lost.

Like an eagle darting on its prey, he took

her utterly to him, set her on his knees, and felt with an indescribable intoxication the voluptuous pressure of this girl, whose richly developed beauties softly enveloped him.

"Come to me, Paquita!" he said, in a low voice.

"Speak, speak without fear!" she said. "This retreat was built for love. No sound can escape from it, so greatly was it desired to guard avariciously the accents and music of the beloved voice. However loud should be the cries, they would not be heard outside these walls. A person might be murdered, and his moans would be as vain as if he were in the midst of the great desert."

"Who has understood jealousy and its needs so well?"

"Never question me as to that," she answered, untying with a gesture of wonderful sweetness the young man's scarf, doubtless in order the better to behold his neck.

"Yes, there is the neck I love so well!" she said. "Wouldst thou please me?"

This interrogation, rendered by the accent almost lascivious, drew De Marsay from the reverie in which he had been plunged by

Paquita's authoritative refusal to allow him any research as to the unknown being who hovered like a shadow about them.

"And if I wished to know who reigns here?"

Paquita looked at him trembling.

"It is not I, then?" he said, rising and freeing himself from the girl, whose head fell backwards. "Where I am, I would be alone."

"Strike, strike! . . ." said the poor slave, a prey to terror.

"For what do you take me then? . . . Will you answer?"

Paquita got up gently, her eyes full of tears, took a poignard from one of the two ebony pièces of furniture, and presented it to Henri with a gesture of submission which would have moved a tiger.

"Give me a feast such as men give when they love," she said, "and whilst I sleep slay me, for I know not how to answer thee. Hearken! I am bound like some poor beast to a stake; I am amazed that I have been able to throw a bridge over the abyss which divides us. Intoxicate me, then kill me! Ah, no, no!" she cried, joining her hands, "do not kill me! I love life! Life is fair to me! If I am a slave,

I am a queen too. I could beguile you with words, tell you that I love you alone, prove it to you, profit by my momentary empire to say to you: 'Take me as one tastes the perfume of a flower when one passes it in a king's garden.' Then, after having used the cunning eloquence of woman and soared on the wings of pleasure, after having quenched my thirst, I could have you cast into a pit, where none could find you, which has been made to gratify vengeance without having to fear that of the law, a pit full of lime which would kindle and consume you, until no particle of you were left. You would stay in my heart, mine for ever."

Henri looked at the girl without trembling, and this fearless gaze filled her with joy.

"No, I shall not do it! You have fallen into no trap here, but upon the heart of a woman who adores you, and it is I who will be cast into the pit."

"All this appears to me prodigiously strange," said De Marsay, considering her. "But you seem to me a good girl, a strange nature; you are, upon my word of honour, a living riddle, the answer to which is very difficult to find."

Paquita understood nothing of what the

young man said, she looked at him gently, opening wide eyes which could never be stupid, so much was pleasure written in them.

"Come, then, my love," she said, returning to her first idea, "wouldst thou please me?"

"I would do all that thou wouldst, and even that thou wouldst not," answered De Marsay with a laugh. He had recovered his foppish ease, as he took the resolve to let himself go to the climax of his good fortune, looking neither before nor after. Perhaps he counted, moreover, on his power and his capacity of a man used to adventures, to dominate this girl a few hours later and learn all her secrets.

"Well," said she, "let me arrange you as I would like."

Paquita went joyously and took from one of the two chests a robe of red velvet, in which she dressed De Marsay, then adorned his head with a woman's bonnet and wrapped a shawl round him. Abandoning herself to these follies with a child's innocence, she laughed a convulsive laugh, and resembled some bird flapping its wings; but she saw nothing beyond.

If it be impossible to paint the unheard of delights which these two creatures—made by

heaven in a joyous moment—found, it is perhaps necessary to translate metaphysically the extraordinary and almost fantastic impressions of the young man. That which persons in the social position of De Marsay, living as he lived, are best able to recognise is a girl's innocence. But, strange phenomenon! The girl of the golden eyes might be virgin, but innocent she was certainly not. The fantastic union of the mysterious and the real, of darkness and light, horror and beauty, pleasure and danger, paradise and hell, which had already been met with in this adventure, was resumed in the capricious and sublime being with whom De Marsay dallied. All the utmost science of the most refined pleasure, all that Henri could know of that poetry of the senses which is called love, was excelled by the treasures poured forth by this girl, whose radiant eyes gave the lie to none of the promises which they made.

She was an oriental poem, in which shone the sun that Saadi, that Hafiz, have set in their pulsing strophes. Only, neither the rhythm of Saadi, nor that of Pindar, could have expressed the ecstasy—full of confusion and stupefaction—which seized the delicious girl

when the error in which an iron hand had caused her to live was at an end.

"Dead!" she said, "I am dead, Adolphe! Take me away to the world's end, to an island where no one knows us. Let there be no traces of our flight! We should be followed to the gates of hell. God! here is the day! Escape! Shall I ever see you again? Yes, to-morrow I will see you, if I have to deal death to all my warders to have that joy. Till to-morrow."

She pressed him in her arms with an embrace in which the terror of death mingled. Then she touched a spring, which must have been in connection with a bell, and implored De Marsay to permit his eyes to be bandaged.

"And if I would not—and if I wished to stay here?"

"You would be the death of me more speedily," she said, "for now I know I am certain to die on your account."

Henri submitted. In the man who has just gorged himself with pleasure there occurs a propensity to forgetfulness, I know not what ingratitude, a desire for liberty, a whim to go elsewhere, a tinge of contempt and, perhaps, of disgust for his idol; in fine, indescribable

sentiments which render him ignoble and ashamed. The certainty of this confused, but real, feeling in souls who are not illuminated by that celestial light, nor perfumed with that holy essence from which the permanence of sentiment springs, doubtless suggested to Rousseau the adventures of Lord Edward, which conclude the letters of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*. If Rousseau is obviously inspired by the work of Richardson, he departs from it in a thousand details, which leave his achievement magnificently original; he has recommended it to posterity by great ideas which it is difficult to liberate by analysis, when, in one's youth, one reads this work with the object of finding in it the lurid representation of the most physical of our feelings, whereas serious and philosophical writers never employ its images except as the consequence or the corollary of a vast thought; and the adventures of Lord Edward are one of the most Europeanly delicate ideas of the whole work.

Henri, therefore, found himself beneath the domination of that confused sentiment which is unknown to true love. There was needful, in some sort, the persuasive grip of compari-

sons, and the irresistible attraction of memories to lead him back to a woman. True love rules above all through recollection. A woman who is not engraven upon the soul by excess of pleasure or by strength of emotion, how can she ever be loved? In Henri's case, Paquita had established herself by both of these reasons. But at this moment, seized as he was by the satiety of his happiness, that delicious melancholy of the body, he could hardly analyse his heart, even by recalling to his lips the taste of the liveliest gratifications that he had ever grasped.

He found himself on the Boulevard Montmartre at the break of day, gazed stupidly at the retreating carriage, produced two cigars from his pocket, lit one from the lantern of a good woman who sold brandy and coffee to workmen and street arabs and chestnut vendors—to all the Parisian populace which begins its work before daybreak; then he went off, smoking his cigar, and putting his hands in his trousers' pockets with a devil-may-care air which did him small honour.

"What a good thing a cigar is! That's one thing a man will not tire of," he said to himself.

Of the girl with the golden eyes, over whom at that time all the elegant youth of Paris was mad, he hardly thought. The idea of death, expressed in the midst of their pleasure, and the fear of which had more than once darkened the brow of that beautiful creature, who held to the houris of Asia by her mother, to Europe by her education, to the tropics by her birth, seemed to him merely one of those deceptions by which women seek to make themselves interesting.

"She is from Havana—the most Spanish region to be found in the New World. So she preferred to feign terror rather than cast in my teeth indisposition or difficulty, coquetry or duty, like a Parisian woman. By her golden eyes, how glad I shall be to sleep."

He saw a hackney coach standing at the corner of Frascati's waiting for some gambler; he awoke the driver, was driven home, went to bed, and slept the sleep of the dissipated, which, for some queer reason—of which no rhymer has yet taken advantage—is as profound as that of innocence. Perhaps it is an instance of the proverbial axiom, *extremes meet.*

About noon De Marsay awoke and stretched himself; he felt the grip of that sort of voracious hunger which old soldiers can remember having experienced on the morrow of victory. He was delighted, therefore, to see Paul de Manerville standing in front of him, for at such a time nothing is more agreeable than to eat in company.

"Well," his friend remarked, "we all imagined that you had been shut up for the last ten days with the girl of the golden eyes."

"The girl of the golden eyes! I have forgotten her. Faith! I have other fish to fry!"

"Ah! you are playing at discretion."

"Why not?" asked De Marsay, with a laugh. "My dear fellow, discretion is the best form of calculation. Listen . . . however, no! I will not say a word. You never teach me anything: I am not disposed to make you a gratuitous present of the treasures of my policy. Life is a river which is of use for the promotion of commerce. In the name of all that is most sacred in life—of cigars! I am no professor of social economy for the instruction of fools. Let us breakfast! It costs less to give you a tunny omelette than to

lavish the resources of my brain on you."

"Do you bargain with your friends?"

"My dear fellow," said Henri, who rarely denied himself a sarcasm, "since, all the same, you may some day need, like anybody else, to use discretion, and since I have much love for you . . yes, I like you! Upon my word, if you only wanted a thousand franc note to keep you from blowing your brains out, you would find it here, for we haven't yet done any business of that sort, eh, Paul? If you had to fight to-morrow, I would measure the ground and load the pistols, so that you might be killed according to rule. In short, if anybody beside myself took it into his head to say ill of you in your absence, he would have to deal with the somewhat nasty gentleman who walks in my shoes—there's what I call a friendship beyond question. Well, my good fellow, if you should ever have need of discretion, understand that there are two sorts of discretion—the active and the negative. Negative discretion is that of fools who make use of silence, negation, an air of refusal, the discretion of locked doors—mere impotence! Active discretion proceeds by affirmation.

Suppose at the club this evening I were to say: 'Upon my word of honour the golden eyed was not worth all she cost me!' Everybody would exclaim when I was gone: 'Did you hear that fop De Marsay, who tried to make us believe that he has already had the girl of the golden eyes? It's his way of trying to disembarrass himself of his rivals; he's no simpleton.' But such a ruse is vulgar and dangerous. However gross a folly one utters, there are always idiots to be found who will believe it. The best form of discretion is that of women when they want to take the change out of their husbands. It consists in compromising a woman with whom we are not concerned, or whom we do not love, in order to save the honour of the one whom we love well enough to respect. It is what is called the *woman-screen*. . . Ah! here is Laurent. What have you got for us?"

"Some Ostend oysters, Monsieur le Comte."

"You will know some day, Paul, how amusing it is to make a fool of the world by depriving it of the secret of one's affections. I derive an immense pleasure in escaping from the stupid jurisdiction of the crowd, which

knows neither what it wants, nor what one wants of it, which takes the means for the end, and by turns curses and adores, elevates and destroys! What a delight to impose emotions on it and receive none from it, to tame it, never to obey it. If one may ever be proud of anything, is it not of a self-acquired power, of which one is at once the cause and effect, the principle and the result? Well, no man knows what I love, nor what I wish. Perhaps what I have loved, or what I may have wished will be known, as a drama which is accomplished is known; but to let my game be seen—weakness, mistake! I know nothing more despicable than strength outwitted by cunning. Can I initiate myself with a laugh into the ambassador's part, if indeed diplomacy is as difficult as life? I doubt it. Have you any ambition? Would you like to become something?"

"But, Henri, you are laughing at me—as though I were not sufficiently mediocre to arrive at anything."

"Good, Paul! If you go on laughing at yourself, you will soon be able to laugh at everybody else."

At breakfast, by the time he had started his cigars, De Marsay began to see the events of the night in a singular light. Like many men of great intelligence, his perspicuity was not spontaneous, it did not at once penetrate to the heart of things. As with all natures endowed with the faculty of living greatly in the present, of extracting, so to speak, the essence of it and assimilating it, his second sight had need of a sort of slumber before it could identify itself with causes. Cardinal de Richelieu was so constituted, and it did not debar in him the gift of foresight necessary to the conception of great designs.

De Marsay's conditions were alike, but at first he only used his weapons for the benefit of his pleasures, and only became one of the most profound politicians of his day when he had saturated himself with those pleasures to which a young man's thoughts—when he has money and power—are primarily directed. Man hardens himself thus: he uses woman in order that she may not make use of him.

At this moment, then, De Marsay perceived that he had been fooled by the girl of the golden eyes, seeing, as he did, in per-

spective, all that night of which the delights had been poured upon him by degrees until they had ended by flooding him in torrents. He could read, at last, that page in effect so brilliant, divine its hidden meaning. The purely physical innocence of Paquita, the bewilderment of her joy, certain words, obscure at first, but now clear, which had escaped her in the midst of that joy, all proved to him that he had posed for another person. As no social corruption was unknown to him, as he professed a complete indifference towards all perversities, and believed them to be justified on the simple ground that they were capable of satisfaction, he was not startled at vice, he knew it as one knows a friend, but he was wounded at having served as sustenance for it. If his presumption was right, he had been outraged in the most sensitive part of him. The mere suspicion filled him with fury, he broke out with the roar of a tiger who has been the sport of a deer, the cry of a tiger which united a brute's strength with the intelligence of the demon.

"I say, what is the matter with you?" asked Paul.

"Nothing!"

"I should be sorry, if you were to be asked whether you had anything against me and were to reply with a *nothing* like that! It would be a sure case of fighting the next day."

"I fight no more duels," said De Marsay.

"That seems to me even more tragical. Do you assassinate then?"

"You travesty words. I execute."

"My dear friend," said Paul, "your jokes are of a very sombre colour this morning."

"What would you have? Pleasure ends in cruelty. Why? I don't know, and am not sufficiently curious to try and find out. . . . These cigars are excellent. Give your friend some tea. Do you know, Paul, I live a brute's life? It should be time to choose oneself a destiny, to employ one's powers on something which makes life worth living. Life is a singular comedy. I am frightened, I laugh at the inconsequence of our social order. The government cuts off the heads of poor devils who have killed a man and licenses creatures who dispatch, medically speaking, a dozen young folks in a season. Morality is powerless against a dozen vices which destroy society

and which nothing can punish. — Another cup!—Upon my word of honour! man is a jester dancing upon a precipice. They talk to us about the immorality of the *Liaisons Dangereuses,* and any other book you like with a vulgar reputation; but there exists a book, horrible, filthy, fearful, corrupting, which is always open and will never be shut, the great book of the world; not to mention another book, a thousand times more dangerous, which is composed of all that men whisper into each other's ears, or women murmur behind their fans, of an evening in society."

"Henri, there is certainly something extraordinary the matter with you; that is obvious in spite of your active discretion."

"Yes! . . . Come, I must kill the time until this evening. Let's to the tables. . . . Perhaps I shall have the good luck to lose."

De Marsay rose, took a handful of bank-notes and folded them into his cigar-case, dressed himself, and took advantage of Paul's carriage to repair to the Salon des Etrangers, where until dinner he consumed the time in those exciting alternations of loss and gain which are the last resource of powerful or-

ganisations when they are compelled to exercise themselves in the void. In the evening he repaired to the trysting-place and submitted complacently to having his eyes bandaged. Then, with that firm will which only really strong men have the faculty of concentrating, he devoted his attention and applied his intelligence to the task of divining through what streets the carriage passed. He had a sort of certitude of being taken to the Rue Saint-Lazare, and being brought to a halt at the little gate in the garden of the Hotel San-Réal. When he passed, as on the first occasion, through this gate, and was put in a litter, carried doubtless by the mulatto and the coachman, he understood, as he heard the gravel grate beneath their feet, why they took such minute precautions. He would have been able, had he been free, or if he had walked, to pluck a twig of laurel, to observe the nature of the soil which clung to his boots, whereas, transported, so to speak, etherially into an inaccessible mansion, his good fortune must remain, what it had been hitherto, a dream. But it is man's despair that all his work, whether for good or evil, is im-

perfect. All his labours, physical or intellectual, are sealed with the mark of destruction. There had been a gentle rain, the earth was moist. At night time certain vegetable perfumes are far stronger than during the day; Henri could smell, therefore, the scent of the mignonette which lined the avenue along which he was conveyed. This indication was enough to light him in the researches which he promised himself to make in order to recognise the hotel which contained Paquita's boudoir. He studied in the same way the turnings which his bearers took within the house, and believed himself able to recall them.

As on the previous night, he found himself on the ottoman before Paquita, who was undoing his bandage; but he saw her pale and altered. She had wept. On her knees like an angel in prayer, but like an angel profoundly sad and melancholy, the poor girl no longer resembled the curious, impatient and impetuous creature who had carried De Marsay on her wings to transport him to the seventh heaven of love. There was something so true in this despair veiled by pleasure, that the terrible De Marsay felt within him an ad-

miration for this new masterpiece of nature, and forgot, for the moment, the chief interest of his assignation.

"What is the matter with thee, my Paquita?"

"My friend," she said, "carry me away this very night. Bear me to some place where no one can say who sees me: 'That is Paquita,' where no one can answer: 'There is a girl with a golden gaze here, who has long hair.' Yonder I will give thee as many pleasures as thou wouldst have of me. Then when you love me no longer, you shall leave me, I shall not complain, I shall say nothing; and your desertion need cause you no remorse, for one day passed with you, only one day, in which I have had you before my eyes, will be worth all my life to me. But if I stay here, I am lost."

"I cannot leave Paris, little one!" replied Henri. "I do not belong to myself, I am bound by a vow to the fortune of several persons who stand to me, as I do to them. But I can place you in a refuge in Paris, where no human power can reach you."

"No," she said, "you forget the power of woman."

Never did phrase uttered by human voice

express terror more absolutely.

"What could reach you, then, if I put myself between you and the world?"

"Poison!" she said. "Doña Concha suspects you already . . . and," she resumed, letting the tears fall and glisten on her cheeks, "it is easy enough to see I am no longer the same. Well, if you abandon me to the fury of the monster who will destroy me, your holy will be done! But come, let there be all the pleasures of life in our love. Besides, I will implore, I will weep and cry out and defend myself: perhaps I shall be saved."

"Whom will you implore?" he asked.

"Silence!" said Paquita. "If I obtain mercy it will perhaps be on account of my discretion."

"Give me my robe," said Henri, insidiously.

"No, no!" she answered quickly, "be what you are, one of those angels whom I have been taught to hate, and in whom I only saw ogres, whilst you are what is fairest under the skies," she said, caressing Henri's hair. "You do not know how silly I am. I have learnt nothing. Since I was twelve years old I have been shut up without ever seeing anyone. I can neither read nor write. I can only speak English and Spanish."

"How is it, then, that you receive letters from London?"

"My letters? . . . See, here they are!" she said, proceeding to take some papers out of a tall Japanese vase.

She offered De Marsay some letters, in which the young man saw, with surprise, strange figures, similar to those of a rebus, traced in blood, and illustrating phrases full of passion.

"But," he cried, marvelling at these hieroglyphics created by the alertness of jealousy, "you are in the power of an infernal genius?"

"Infernal," she repeated.

"But how, then, were you able to get out?"

"Ah!" she said, "that was my ruin. I drove Doña Concha to choose between the fear of immediate death and anger to be. I had the curiosity of a demon, I wished to break the bronze circle which they had described between creation and me, I wished to see what young people were like, for I knew nothing of man except the Marquis and Cristemio. Our coachman and the lackey who accompanies us are old men. . . ."

"But you were not always shut up? Your health . . ?"

"Ah," she answered, "we used to walk, but it was at night and in the country, by the side of the Seine, away from people."

"Are you not proud of being loved like that?"

"No," she said, "no longer. However full it be, this hidden life is but darkness in comparison with the light."

"What do you call the light?"

"Thee, my lovely Adolphe! Thee, for whom I would give my life. All the passionate things that have been told me, and that I have inspired, I feel for thee! For a certain time I understood nothing of existence, but now I know what love is, and hitherto I have been the loved one only; for myself, I did not love. I would give up everything for you, take me away. If you like, take me as a toy, but let me be near you until you break me."

"You will have no regrets?"

"Not one!" she said, letting him read her eyes, whose golden tint was pure and clear.

"Am I the favoured one?" said Henri to himself. If he suspected the truth he was ready at that time to pardon the offence in view of a love so single minded. "I shall soon

see," he thought.

If Paquita owed him no account of the past, yet the least recollection of it became in his eyes a crime. He had therefore the sombre strength to withold a portion of his thought, to study her, even while abandoning himself to the most enticing pleasures that ever peri descended from the skies had devised for her beloved.

Paquita seemed to have been created for love by a particular effort of nature. In a night her feminine genius had made the most rapid progress. Whatever might be the power of this young man, and his indifference in the matter of pleasures, in spite of his satiety of the previous night, he found in the girl with the golden eyes that seraglio, which a loving woman knows how to create, and which a man never refuses. Paquita responded to that passion which is felt by all really great men for the infinite—that mysterious passion so dramatically expressed in Faust, so poetically translated in Manfred, and which urged Don Juan to search the heart of women, in his hope to find there that limitless thought in pursuit of which so many hunters after

spectres have started, which wise men think to discover in science, and which mystics find in God alone. The hope of possessing at last the ideal being with whom the struggle could be constant and tireless ravished De Marsay, who, for the first time for long, opened his heart. His nerves expanded, his coldness was dissipated in the atmosphere of that ardent soul, his hard and fast theories melted away, and happiness coloured his existence to the tint of the rose and white boudoir. Experiencing the sting of a higher pleasure, he was carried beyond the limits within which he had hitherto confined passion. He would not be surpassed by this girl, whom a somewhat artificial love had formed already for the needs of his soul, and then he found in that vanity which urges a man to be in all things a victor, strength enough to tame the girl; but, at the same time, urged beyond that line where the soul is mistress over herself, he lost himself in those delicious limboes, which the vulgar call so foolishly "the imaginary regions." He was tender, kind, and confidential. He affected Paquita almost to madness.

"Why should not we go to Sorrento, to

Nice, to Chiavari, and pass all our life so? Will you?" he asked of Paquita, in a penetrating voice.

"Was there need to say to me: 'Will you'?" she cried. "Have I a will? I am nothing apart from you, except in so far as I am a pleasure for you. If you would choose a retreat worthy of us, Asia is the only country where love can unfold his wings . . ."

"You are right," answered Henri. "Let us go to the Indies, there where spring is eternal, where the earth grows only flowers, where man can display the magnificence of kings and none shall say him nay, as in the foolish lands where they would realise the dull chimera of equality. Let us go to the country where one lives in the midst of a nation of slaves, where the sun shines ever on a palace which is always white, where the air sheds perfumes, the birds sing of love, and where, when one can love no more, one dies. . ."

"And where one dies together!" said Paquita. "But do not let us start to-morrow, let us start this moment . . . take Cristemio."

"Faith! pleasure is the fairest climax of life. Let us go to Asia, but to start, my child, one

needs much gold, and to have gold one must set one's affairs in order."

She understood no part of these ideas.

"Gold! There is a pile of it here—as high as that," she said, holding up her hand.

"It is not mine."

"What does that matter?" she went on; "if we have need of it let us take it."

"It does not belong to you."

"Belong!" she repeated. "Have you not taken me? When we have taken it, it will belong to us."

He gave a laugh.

"Poor innocent! You know nothing of the world."

"Nay, but this is what I know," she cried, clasping Henri to her.

At the very moment when De Marsay was forgetting all, and conceiving the desire to appropriate this creature for ever, he received in the midst of his joy a dagger thrust, which smote through his heart and mortified it for the first time. Paquita, who had lifted him vigorously in the air, as though to contemplate him, exclaimed: "Oh, Margarita!"

"Margarita!" cried the young man with a

roar; "now I know all that I still tried to disbelieve."

He leapt upon the cabinet in which the long poignard was kept. Happily for Paquita and for himself, the cupboard was shut. His fury waxed at this impediment, but he recovered his tranquillity, went and found his cravat, and advanced towards her with an air of such ferocious meaning that, without knowing of what crime she had been guilty, Paquita understood, none the less, that her life was in question. With one bound she rushed to the other end of the room to escape the fatal knot which De Marsay tried to pass round her neck. There was a struggle. On either side there was an equality of strength, agility and suppleness. To end the combat Paquita threw between the legs of her lover a cushion which made him fall, and profited by the respite which this advantage gave her, to push the button of the spring which caused the bell to ring. Promptly the mulatto arrived. In a second Cristemio leapt on De Marsay and held him down with one foot on his chest, his heel turned towards the throat. De Marsay realised that, if he struggled, at a single sign

from Paquita he would be instantly crushed.

"Why did you want to kill me, my beloved?" she said.

De Marsay made no reply.

"In what have I angered you?" she asked. "Speak, let us understand each other."

Henri maintained the phlegmatic attitude of a strong man who feels himself vanquished; his countenance, cold, silent, entirely English, revealed the consciousness of his dignity in a momentary resignation. Moreover, he had already thought, in spite of the vehemence of his anger, that it was scarcely prudent to compromise himself with the law by killing this girl on the spur of the moment, before he had arranged the murder in such a manner as should insure his impunity.

"My beloved," went on Paquita, "speak to me; do not leave me without one loving farewell! I would not keep in my heart the terror which you have just inspired in it. . . Will you speak?" she said, stamping her foot with anger.

De Marsay, for all reply, gave her a glance, which signified so plainly, "*You must die!*" that Paquita threw herself upon him.

"Ah, well, you want to kill me! . . . If my

death can give you any pleasure—kill me!"

She made a sign to Cristemio, who withdrew his foot from the body of the young man, and retired without letting his face show that he had formed any opinion, good or bad, with regard to Paquita.

"That is a man," said De Marsay, pointing to the mulatto, with a sombre gesture. "There is no devotion like the devotion which obeys in friendship, and does not stop to weigh motives. In that man you possess a true friend."

"I will give him you, if you like," she answered; "he will serve you with the same devotion that he has for me, if I so instruct him."

She waited for a word of recognition, and went on with an accent replete with tenderness:

"Adolphe, give me then one kind word! . . . It is nearly day."

Henri did not answer. The young man had one sorry quality, for one considers as something great everything which resembles strength, and often men invent extravagances. Henry knew not how to pardon. That *returning upon itself* which is one of the soul's graces, was a non-existent sense for him. The

ferocity of the Northern man, with which the English blood is deeply tainted, had been transmitted to him by his father. He was inexorable both in his good and evil impulses. Paquita's exclamation had been all the more horrible to him, in that it had dethroned him from the sweetest triumph which had ever flattered his man's vanity. Hope, love, and every emotion had been exalted with him, all had lit up within his heart and his intelligence, then these torches illuminating his life had been extinguished by a cold wind. Paquita, in her stupefaction of grief, had only strength enough to give the signal for departure.

"What is the use of that!" she said, throwing away the bandage. "If he does not love me, if he hates me, it is all over."

She waited for one look, did not obtain it, and fell, half dead. The mulatto cast a glance at Henri, so horribly significant, that, for the first time in his life, the young man, to whom no one denied the gift of rare courage, trembled. "*If you do not love her well, if you give her the least pain, I will kill you.*" Such was the sense of that brief gaze. De Marsay was escorted, with a care almost obse-

quious, along the dimly-lit corridor, at the end of which he issued by a secret door into the garden of the Hotel San-Real. The mulatto made him walk cautiously through an avenue of lime trees, which led to a little gate opening upon a street which was at that hour deserted. De Marsay took a keen notice of everything. The carriage awaited him. This time the mulatto did not accompany him, and at the moment when Henri put his head out of the window to look once more at the gardens of the hotel he encountered the white eyes of Cristemio, with whom he exchanged a glance. On either side there was a provocation, a challenge, the declaration of a savage war, of a duel in which ordinary laws were invalid, where treason and treachery were admitted means. Cristemio knew that Henri had sworn Paquita's death. Henri knew that Cristemio would like to kill him before he killed Paquita. Both understood each other to perfection.

"The adventure is growing complicated in a most interesting way," said Henri.

"Where is the gentleman going to?" asked the coachman.

De Marsay was driven to the house of Paul de Manerville. For more than a week Henri was away from home, and no one could discover either what he did during this period, nor where he stayed. This retreat saved him from the fury of the mulatto and caused the ruin of the charming creature who had placed all her hope in him whom she loved as never human heart had loved on this earth before. On the last day of the week, about eleven o'clock at night, Henri drove up in a carriage to the little gate in the garden of the Hotel San-Réal. Four men accompanied him. The driver was evidently one of his friends, for he stood up on his box, like a man who was to listen, an attentive sentinel, for the least sound. One of the other three took his stand outside the gate in the street; the second waited in the garden, leaning against the wall; the last, who carried in his hand a bunch of keys, accompanied De Marsay.

"Henri," said his companion to him, "we are betrayed."

"By whom, my good Ferragus?"

"They are not all asleep," replied the chief of the Devourers; "it is absolutely certain that

some one in the house has neither eaten nor drunk. . . Look! see that light!"

"We have a plan of the house, from where does it come?"

"I need no plan to know," replied Ferragus; "it comes from the room of the Marquise."

"Ah," cried De Marsay, "no doubt she arrived from London to-day. The woman has robbed me even of my revenge! But if she has anticipated me, my good Gratien, we will give her up to the law."

"Listen, listen! . . . The thing is settled," said Ferragus to Henri.

The two friends listened intently, and heard some feeble cries which might have aroused pity in the breast of a tiger.

"Your Marquise did not think the sound would escape by the chimney," said the chief of the Devourers, with the laugh of a critic, enchanted to detect a fault in a work of merit.

"We alone, we know how to provide for every contingency," said Henri. "Wait for me. I want to see what is going on upstairs—I want to know how their domestic quarrels are managed. By God! I believe she is roasting her at a slow fire."

De Marsay lightly scaled the stairs, with which he was familiar, and recognised the passage leading to the boudoir. When he opened the door he experienced the involuntary shudder which the sight of bloodshed gives to the most determined of men. The spectacle which was offered to his view was, moreover, in more than one respect astonishing to him. The Marquise was a woman: she had calculated her vengeance with that perfection of perfidy which distinguishes the weaker animals. She had dissimulated her anger in order to assure herself of the crime before she punished it.

"Too late, my beloved!" said Paquita, in her death agony, casting her pale eyes upon De Marsay.

The girl of the golden eyes expired in a bath of blood. The great illumination of candles, a delicate perfume which was perceptible, a certain disorder, in which the eye of a man accustomed to amorous adventures could not but discern the madness which is common to all the passions, revealed how cunningly the Marquise had interrogated the guilty one. The white room, where the blood

showed so well, betrayed a long struggle. The prints of Paquita's hands were on the cushions. Here she had clung to her life, here she had defended herself, here she had been struck. Long strips of the tapestry had been torn down by her bleeding hands, which, without a doubt, had struggled long. Paquita must have tried to reach the window; her bare feet had left their imprints on the edge of the divan, along which she must have run. Her body, mutilated by the dagger-thrusts of her executioner, told of the fury with which she had disputed a life which Henri had made precious to her. She lay stretched on the floor, and in her death throes had bitten the ankles of Madame de San-Réal, who still held in her hand her dagger, dripping blood. The hair of the Marquise had been torn out, she was covered with bites, many of which were bleeding, and her torn dress revealed her in a state of semi-nudity, with the scratches on her breasts. She was sublime so. Her head, eager and maddened, exhaled the odour of blood. Her panting mouth was open, and her nostrils were not sufficient for her breath. There are certain animals who fall upon their

enemy in their rage, do it to death, and seem in the tranquillity of victory to have forgotten it. There are others who prowl around their victim, who guard it in fear lest it should be taken away from them, and who, like the Achilles of Homer, drag their enemy by the feet nine times round the walls of Troy. The Marquise was like that. She did not see Henri. In the first place, she was too secure of her solitude to be afraid of witnesses; and, secondly, she was too intoxicated with warm blood, too excited with the fray, too exalted to take notice of the whole of Paris, if Paris had formed a circle round her. A thunderbolt would not have disturbed her. She had not even heard Paquita's last sigh, and believed that the dead girl could still hear her.

"Die without confessing!" she said. "Go down to hell, monster of ingratitude; belong to no one but the fiend. For the blood you gave him you owe me all your own! Die, die, suffer a thousand deaths! I have been too kind —I was only a moment killing you. I should have made you experience all the tortures that you have bequeathed to me. I—I shall live! I shall live in misery. I have no one left to love

but God!"

She gazed at her.

"She is dead!" she said to herself, after a pause, in a violent reaction. "Dead! Oh, I shall die of grief!"

The Marquise was throwing herself upon the divan, stricken with a despair which deprived her of speech, when this movement brought her in view of Henri de Marsay.

"Who are you?" she asked, rushing at him with her dagger raised.

Henri caught her arm, and thus they could contemplate each other face to face. A horrible surprise froze the blood in their veins, and their limbs quivered like those of frightened horses. In effect, the two Menœchmi had not been more alike. With one accord they uttered the same phrase:

"Lord Dudley must have been your father?"

The head of each was drooped in affirmation.

"She was true to the blood," said Henri, pointing to Paquita.

"She was as little guilty as it is possible to be." replied Margarita Euphémia Porrabéril, and she threw herself upon the body of Paquita, giving vent to a cry of despair. "Poor child!

Oh, if I could bring thee to life again! I was wrong—forgive me, Paquita! Dead! and I live! I—I am the most unhappy."

At that moment the horrible face of the mother of Paquita appeared.

"You are come to tell me that you never sold her to me to kill," cried the Marquise. "I know why you have left your lair. I will pay you twice over. Hold your peace."

She took a bag of gold from the ebony cabinet, and threw it contemptuously at the old woman's feet. The chink of the gold was potent enough to excite a smile on the Georgian's impassive face.

"I come at the right moment for you, my sister," said Henri. "The law will ask of you—"

"Nothing," replied the Marquise. "One person alone might ask a reckoning for the death of this girl. Cristemio is dead."

"And the mother," said Henri, pointing to the old woman. "Will you not be always in her power?"

"She comes from a country where women are not beings, but things—chattels, with which one does as one wills, which one buys, sells and

slays; in short, which one uses for one's caprices as you, here, use a piece of furniture. Besides, she has one passion which dominates all the others, and which would have stifled her maternal love, even if she had loved her daughter, a passion—"

"What?" Henri asked quickly, interrupting his sister.

"Play! God keep you from it," answered the Marquise.

"But whom have you," said Henri, looking at the girl of the golden eyes, "who will help you to remove the traces of this fantasy which the law would not overlook?"

"I have her mother," replied the Marquise, designating the Georgian, to whom she made a sign to remain.

"We shall meet again," said Henry, who was thinking anxiously of his friends, and felt that it was time to leave.

"No, brother," she said, "we shall not meet again. I am going back to Spain to enter the Convent of *los Dolores.*"

"You are too young yet, too lovely," said Henri, taking her in his arms and giving her a kiss.

"Good-bye," she said; "there is no consolation when you have lost that which has seemed to you the infinite."

A week later Paul de Manerville met De Marsay in the Tuileries, on the Terrasse des Feuillants.

"Well, what has become of our beautiful girl of the golden eyes, you rascal?"

"She is dead."

"What of?"

"The lungs."

THE END

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